

Arafat meets with Pope, renews invitation to Bethlehem

Crown Prince leaves to continue studies

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Saturday saw off HRH Crown Prince Hamzah upon his departure for the U.K. to resume his studies at Sandhurst Military College. King Abdullah was accompanied by Their Royal Highnesses Prince Mohammad, Prince Faisal, Prince Ali, Prince Hashem, Prince Ghazi, Prince Ra'd, Prince Ali Ben Nayf, Prince Talal Ben Mohammad, and Prince Firas.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية مستقلة تصدر عن المؤسسة للصحافة الأردنية، الرأي

Volume 24 Number 7076

AMMAN SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 1999, DHUL QADAH 5, 1419

Price: Jordan 200 Fils

Five CIS members to abandon pact

MOSCOW (AFP) — Five member countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which groups all the former Soviet republics but the three Baltic states, intend to renounce its collective security treaty, the Interfax agency said here Saturday. Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan all plan to abandon the treaty which was signed in May 1992 in Tashkent by nine of the 12 CIS members, the agency said, citing military and diplomatic sources.

'9 Colombian rebels die in clashes'

BOGOTA (AFP) — Nine guerrillas died and two policemen were wounded in the latest fighting, Colombian officials said Saturday. Eight rebels died in fighting in the rural zone of Uceda, according to General Jaime Cortes, commander of the army's third division. Another guerrilla from the leftist National Liberation Army (ELN) was killed during an operation to rescue a landowner held hostage in Aguadas, in the western coffee-growing area of the country. In a separate incident in the northwest region of Antioquia, two policemen were injured when rebels from the country's largest and best-equipped insurgent group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), attacked the village of Conventio.

Mudslide kills 5 in Colombia

BOGOTA (AFP) — Five people died and 10 more were injured when heavy rain triggered mudslides in Pereira, a city hit by an earthquake in January, police said Saturday. One of the worst-hit areas was the suburb of Turin, where rescue services managed to save six people. "We felt a great noise and the mountain just came down on top of us," one homeowner who took part in rescue efforts told local radio. The heavy rains of the past week have brought on mudslides in mountainous areas, particularly where cracks in the terrain opened up during January's earthquake, said Ramon Salcedo, head of Pereira's fire service.

'Mental patients starved in 1940s'

STOCKHOLM (R) — About 200 men starved to death at a Swedish mental hospital in 1941-43, the newspaper Dagens Nyheter said on Saturday, calling it another example of practices in Sweden like those used in Nazi Germany. Vipeholm Hospital in Lund was Sweden's only specialised clinic for patients labelled as "difficult to handle idiots," the newspaper said. Hospital records studied by a journalist showed the death rate tripled in 1941, with the increase mainly among those with the lowest intelligence. "The women and those with 'higher standing' were completely unaffected by this epidemic," the newspaper said.

Argentine capital still without power

BUENOS AIRES (R) — Nearly 60,000 people in the Argentine capital remained without power for a sixth consecutive day on Saturday as electrical distributor Edesur struggled to restore service following a substation fire, a city official said. The fire at an electrical substation on Monday initially left as many as half a million people without power in Buenos Aires. The outage has sparked fierce protests by city residents and leaders. Residents of the Balvanera Sur neighbourhood started fires and threw trash at Edesur's offices on Friday night, demanding electricity.

Jordan's link in worldwide nuclear monitoring system to be upgraded

By Francesca Ciriaci

AMMAN — The Ashqouf seismological station, part of a global network monitoring compliance with nuclear non-proliferation efforts, will be surveyed and improved by the end of next year, the head of a nuclear monitoring organisation said Saturday. Wolfgang Hoffmann, executive secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty Organisation (CTBTO), said the \$250,000 project will include technology transfer, supply and installation of equipment, local personnel training, and software. Ashqouf is one of 120 seismological stations worldwide that the CTBTO auxiliary network utilises to detect, locate, and measure nuclear explosions. "First we will survey the station, and then we will update it, either this year or next year, depending on the funds available," Hoffmann told a press conference at the Institute of Diplomacy.

His two-day visit, during which he was received by His Majesty King Abdullah, and

held talks with senior officials as well as experts from the Royal Scientific Society and the Natural Resources Authority, was aimed at "discussing the project and taking the practical and legal steps to get started." Once completed, the CTBTO global network will comprise 321 units, including primary and auxiliary seismological stations, radionuclide stations to monitor the atmosphere, as well as hydroacoustic and infrasound stations. Around 100 stations have already been built, according to Rashid Qubeisi, director of the CTBTO International Data Centre. Many of them are already operational, but some, such as Ashqouf, need to be upgraded. "The CTBT is unique with regard to the global verification network that it [will] provide, with no gaps whatsoever," Hoffmann told reporters. "The CTBTO monitoring network could be completed by 2004. However, that depends on how much money the signatory states are willing to spend," Hoffmann added. Japan, which is the only

country to have been attacked with atomic weapons, "contributes for obvious political reasons 20 per cent of our budget, which is \$75 million for 1999," Hoffmann said. Jordan was one of the first states to sign the 1996 CTBT and is among 29 of the 152 signatory states that have already deposited instruments of ratification before the U.N. secretary general. "The CTBT is a practical step in the direction of nuclear disarmament, because by forbidding any tests it makes practically impossible to fabricate new armaments," explained Hoffmann. "Jordan is very supportive and makes a great contribution to the organisation," Hoffmann said, adding that two out of around 100 professionals at the CTBTO are Jordanians. In the Middle East, the nuclear monitoring network envisages, in addition to Ashqouf station, two seismological stations per country in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Israel; one radionuclide station in Kuwait; three seismological, one radionuclide, and one infrasound station in Iran;

one seismological station in Oman; and one infrasound and one seismological station in Tunisia. The only states in the region that have not signed the CTBT are Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq. India and Pakistan, which drew international condemnation for their nuclear tests last May, also are not parties to the treaty. But "they both declared their intention to enter the CTBT, and we expect them to do so this year," Hoffmann said. "According to the treaty, stations are distributed in a specific configuration that permits the detection of [nuclear explosions] of at least one kilotonne [of magnitude]," Qubeisi told the press conference. "But [our facilities] are much more sophisticated than that," he added, "and we have already detected events of 0.1 kilotonne [of magnitude]," Hoffmann added. "Eventually, our data will also serve the study of geological phenomena, such as earthquakes. Science is very interested in our data and will benefit greatly from them."



His Majesty King Abdullah talks to U.S. Army General Henry Shelton, chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, at the Royal Palace in Amman on Saturday (Reuters photo)

King receives condolences from U.S. Army general

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Saturday received at the Royal Court General Henry Shelton, chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, who offered condolences to the King on the passing away of King Hussein. King Abdullah and General Shelton reviewed Jordanian-U.S. relations and cooperation in military fields, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra, which quoted Shelton as saying that the U.S. intends to continue its military aid to the Kingdom and strengthen the defence capacity of the Jordan Armed Forces. On Friday, President Bill Clinton asked Congress to approve \$300 million in extra aid to Jordan, some of which will be used to modernise Jordan's military. After the meeting, King

Abdullah, accompanied by HRH Prince Hassan, hosted a lunch in honour of the U.S. military chairman and his accompanying delegation. Attending the lunch were Their Royal Highnesses Prince Faisal, Prince Ali and Prince Hashem, Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh. Their Royal Highnesses Prince Talal Ben Mohammad, Prince Ghazi Ben Mohammad, and Prince Zeid Ben Shaker, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Field Marshal Abdul Hafez Mirza Kaabach, General Intelligence Department Director General Samih Bataineh, Royal Air Force Chief of Staff Major General Mohamad Ababneh, and U.S. Ambassador to Jordan William Burns. Shelton, who arrived in Amman on Friday and is due

in Riyadh for talks with his Saudi counterpart and to visit U.S. forces stationed in the kingdom, also met yesterday with Kaabach for discussions on bilateral military cooperation. Also Saturday, King Abdullah received at Raghadan Palace former Lebanese Prime Minister Amin Hafez, who offered his condolences to the King. King Abdullah received a cable of condolences from the King of Bhutan, who also congratulated him on assuming his constitutional duties as King of Jordan. Another cable of condolences was received from Abdul Aziz Ben Othman Twejjeri, director general of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.

Several reported killed in Iraqi riots after Shiite cleric assassinated

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Several people were killed and wounded in riots that erupted in Baghdad following the assassination of a leading Iraqi Shiite Muslim cleric and his two sons, CNN reported Saturday. Eyewitnesses told the network that demonstrators clashed with heavily armed government forces in Saddam City, a mainly Shiite suburb in the north of the Iraqi capital. Iraqi authorities have barred journalists from the area. Iraq denied reports that riots had erupted in the Baghdad suburb following the assassination of the cleric, the official INA news agency said. "The CNN Breaking News that was broadcast this afternoon about alleged clashes between demonstrators and governmental forces in Baghdad is a disturbing and false report," INA chief Uday Tai told reporters. CNN reported that the security presence in the neighbourhood was now "overwhelming and unprecedented. There were armed men on every corner carrying everything from hand guns to

assault rifles." The violence followed the murder of Ayatollah Mohammad Sadek Al Sadr and his two sons, who were slain overnight Friday, a government spokesman said, quoted by the official INA news agency. The agency had previously reported the cleric was killed overnight Thursday. "The security services managed to arrest some of the murderers," and are still looking for any others involved, the information and culture ministry spokesman said. INA did not specify where the killing took place. For two years Ayatollah Sadr, aged in his 60s, had been imam in Kufa, a town near the southern holy city of Najaf, some 160 kilometres south of Baghdad. The ministry spokesman accused the assassins of "fomenting sedition between the sons of our unified people," in a reference to the Shiite and Sunni branches of Islam. An Iran-based Iraqi opposition group accused Baghdad of being behind Ayatollah

Sadr's murder. "This new crime is part of a vast plan by Saddam Hussein's regime to wipe out religious Shiite dignitaries," a member of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) told AFP. Ayatollah Sadr was appointed grand ayatollah by the Iraqi government following the death of his predecessor Grand Ayatollah Abul Kassem Al Khoi in Najaf in 1992. In principle, grand ayatollahs are appointed by their peers and are considered a source of religious reference, wielding significant theological and political power among the Shiite population. Ties between Ayatollah Sadr and the government soured after he started calling six months ago for Shiites to attend weekly prayers in mosques, while the authorities disapprove of large gatherings. Ayatollah Sadr was the nephew of Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Bagher Al Sadr, a religious leader killed in 1979, the opposition said. Shiite make up about half

Iraq's population, concentrated mainly in the south of the country. Few of them have a role in government. The Shiite population in the south and centre of Iraq rose up in insurrection following the 1991 Gulf War, but were put down in a bloody repression. In January, three people were killed and several others wounded after an attacker hurled a grenade at leading Shiite cleric Ayatollah Bashir Hussein Al Bakistani in southern city of Najaf. Last year two Shiite clerics were assassinated in Najaf, which is home to the mausoleum of the Imam Ali, son-in-law of Prophet Mohammad and a revered Shiite figure. In November, Ezzat Ibrahim, deputy to President Saddam Hussein, escaped an assassination attempt in Kerbala outside the mausoleum of the Imam Hussein, son of Ali and also a revered figure for Shiite Muslims. Thirty-nine people were arrested in connection with that attack.

King briefed on government's efforts to encourage investment

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Saturday headed a meeting with the government's economic team, during which he was briefed by Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh on the government's efforts to encourage investment and promote economic growth. At the meeting, which was attended by Their Royal Highnesses Prince Faisal, Prince Ali and Prince Talal Ben Mohammad as well as Royal Court Chief Jawad Anani, Tarawneh briefed King Abdullah on the government's current contacts with a number of countries to

promote economic cooperation and increase trade exchanges. The King issued directives to intensify efforts to boost Arab and foreign investments in the Kingdom. Participants at the meeting agreed to develop a mechanism and form a government body to encourage local and foreign investment. "We understand the competition is very strong around us, and therefore we have to work very quickly to promote our projects and to facilitate the required legal procedures," Tarawneh said after the meeting.

King Abdullah stressed the importance of safeguarding the rights of all employees working in firms that the government plans to privatise. The King praised the government's efforts to provide facilities to citizens in all parts of the Kingdom and emphasised the importance of improving economic performance in order to create more job opportunities and combat unemployment. A number of ministers as well as the Central Bank governor briefed the King on current projects and financial policies as well as the privatisation programme.

Kosovo autonomy accord deadline extended three days

RAMBOUILLET (R) — The major power Contact Group on Saturday extended the deadline for a Kosovo peace accord until Tuesday after Serbs and ethnic Albanians neared a political deal but Belgrade continued to oppose a NATO role in policing it. By the original noon (1100 GMT) deadline, both delegations fell short of totally agreeing with the plan, drafted by the six-nation Contact Group, that would establish ethnic Albanian autonomy in the Serbian province, French officials said. French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine told a press conference at Rambouillet castle outside Paris that both sides now had until 1400 GMT on Tuesday to agree to the peace plan in order to avert NATO strikes on Serbia. Vedrine said that the deadline was extended because "very substantial progress has been made on reaching agreement on the framework and political



chapters [of] the [three-year] interim agreement." But he said Belgrade was putting up the biggest resistance to the accord by objecting to the West's demand for a NATO peacekeeping force to implement it on the ground. "It is still the Yugoslav delegation which refuses to take the

decisions which seem indispensable to us. "Until the whole deal is agreed, no part of the deal can be agreed," he said, adding that what the Contact Group was asking of Belgrade "demands sacrifices." NATO had threatened to bomb Serbian targets if Belgrade was held responsible for blocking a final agreement. But diplomats said the results of the Rambouillet talks so far were not clear-cut and there was scope for further negotiation. Earlier in the day, a European diplomat had said that the ethnic Albanian delegation was still holding out for a referendum on self-determination after three years of autonomy and had not budged. "They are being very sticky," he said. U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said the Serbs bore the "lion's share" of blame for obstacles to an accord. But she said she believed

remaining disputes could be overcome and had no plans to fly to Belgrade for any last-ditch talks with Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic. "Let me stress that we expect nothing less than a complete interim agreement including Belgrade's acceptance of a NATO-led force," she told the news conference. "Until the parties have accepted all provisions of the agreement, preparations for NATO military action will continue. And if that agreement is not confirmed by Tuesday, [NATO] Secretary General [Javier] Solana will draw the appropriate conclusions." Some 430 NATO warplanes — including 260 U.S. jets — were on alert for possible strikes against Yugoslavia. A senior U.S. official earlier accused the Serbs of refusing to engage seriously on military issues. But other diplomats said a formula might be found allowing a neutrally named NATO-led force under the aus-

pices of the United Nations Security Council. Far from the Byzantine diplomacy inside Rambouillet's 14th-century French chateau, fighting flared anew in Kosovo on Saturday when Serbian security forces shelled an ethnic Albanian village, sending hundreds of inhabitants fleeing. Groups of Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) guerrillas took cover as Serbian army and police units pummeled the village southwest of the provincial capital Pristina, with heavy mortar rounds and machine-guns, witnesses and journalists at the scene said. There were no immediate reports of casualties. International monitors had reported heightened Serbian military movements on Friday and a heavy exchange of fire on Saturday with KLA guerrillas, who are fighting for independence for Kosovo and have representatives at the peace talks.

In Rambouillet, Serbian sources said they were ready to sign the political document on autonomy but an international military presence was unacceptable unless Yugoslavia as a sovereign state invited NATO and Russia to send troops. "The Russians are 100 per cent behind our delegation in opposing any military deal. Some of the Europeans also have reservations," the source said as Serbian Republic President Milan Milutinovic continued talks with Western ministers. U.S. State Department spokesman James Rubin insisted there could be no separation of the political and military aspects of an accord. NATO wants to uphold any accord with 28,000 soldiers. Underlining the gravity of the situation, Western governments began evacuating diplomats, aid workers and their families from Serbia, the main republic in federal Yugoslavia.

Libya answers Annan letter, reports say it's displeased about sanctions

UNITED NATIONS (AP)

Libya has made some "preliminary observations" on a letter from Secretary General Kofi Annan outlining assurances if two Libyan suspects are handed over for trial in the 1988 bombing of a Pan Am jet, a U.N. spokesman said.

Libya's U.N. Ambassador Abuzed Omar Dorda presented the observations "orally and informally" to a senior U.N. official, said spokesman Fred Eckhard.

"We are now studying those," he disclosed. Libya's initial reaction to Annan's letter, which was sent Wednesday, when asked about a report in Friday's Arabic-language daily Al Hayat, it quoted diplomats as saying Libya was not pleased because the letter didn't contain clear-cut assurances of lifting sanctions if the men are handed

over.

The Security Council has pledged to suspend sanctions against Libya as soon as the suspects arrive for trial in the Netherlands. The sanctions include a ban on air travel, the freezing of some Libyan assets overseas, restrictions on diplomatic personnel, and a ban on the purchase of oil equipment.

Libya wants sanctions lifted — not just suspended — when the men are turned over.

But under a 1992 resolution imposing sanctions, the council said they will remain until Libya cooperates fully in establishing responsibility for the bombing and until the Libyan government commits itself "definitively to cease all forms of terrorist activity and all assistance to terrorist groups." Libya must also "demonstrate its renunciation of terrorism," the resolu-

tion said.

A 1993 resolution says that after sanctions are suspended, the secretary general must report to the council within 90 days on whether Libya has complied with these provisions before the measures can be lifted altogether.

In August, Libya accepted in principle the U.S.-British proposal for a trial in the Netherlands under Scottish law because the plane exploded over Lockerbie, Scotland. Libya balked, however, at the prospect that the suspects, if convicted, would be imprisoned in Scotland. It also wanted sanctions lifted.

Reports last weekend from South African and Saudi Arabian officials mediating on behalf of the United Nations indicated that a trial deal could be imminent. While the letter from

Annan has not been made public, families of some of the 270 people killed in the crash have been told that it says the men won't be questioned about issues unrelated to the trial — and that the goal of the trial is not to undermine the Libyan regime.

Susan Cohen of Cape May, New Jersey, whose 20-year-old daughter died in the crash, said in a statement Friday that severe limitations on the trial will make conviction of the two suspects "much more difficult and perhaps impossible." Cohen, who believes Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi masterminded the bombing, said the proposal represents "a crude betrayal" for victims' families hoping to learn the truth about the bombing that killed their loved ones "and a cynical victory for their killers."

Ultra-Orthodox Jews protest shop open on the Sabbath

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP)

the battle between Jerusalem's secular and religious Jews spread to a new front Saturday: A downtown supermarket, the first in a Jewish neighbourhood to be open on the Sabbath.

A dozen ultra-Orthodox Jews crowded around "drugstore 2000" at the top of the popular Ben Yehuda Pedestrian mall, shouting, "Sabbath!" at one point, a fistfight broke out between two demonstrators and one of the store's owners, Moshe Abergil. Police pulled them apart.

The time has come to break the ultra-Orthodox grip on Jerusalem, Abergil said, as a black-banded ultra-Orthodox man chanted "Sabbath" and tried to enter the store.

"Sabbath is outside," Abergil said, blocking his way. Under Jewish law, all work and commercial activity is banned from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday and shops in Israel close during the biblically mandated day of rest.

About 100 restaurants, convenience stores, and clubs are open on the Sabbath in the traditionally Jewish western part of the city, but drugstore 2000, which opened Friday, is the first supermarket, with wide aisles featuring vegetables, bread, flowers and liquor, to remain open on the Sabbath.

Zeev, a 22-year-old seminary student, said the 24-hour store eroded the Jewish character of Jerusalem. "Everything in Jerusalem



Israeli grocery store owner Zion Abergil (R) prevents an ultra-Orthodox Jew from entering his store Saturday. A handful of ultra-Orthodox Jews protested outside the shop when it opened its doors on the Jewish Sabbath, and some tried to enter to persuade shoppers to leave. Policemen guarded the store during the day, fearing it would become the latest flashpoint in the struggle between secular and religious Jews in Israel (Reuters photo)

has always been closed," he said, declining to give his last name. "It is forbidden to be open on the Sabbath."

The battle between secular and observant Jews over the role of religion in daily life has intensified in recent years. About 70 per cent of Jews in Israel are secular.

Last month, ultra-Orthodox demonstrators threw garbage at customers of a trendy cafe to protest it being open on the Sabbath. Throughout the day, secular Israelis, including left-

wing politicians, streamed into the store, some to sneak a peek, some to make a political statement, and some just to pick up a loaf of bread. Dozens milled around the store's entrance, arguing with the ultra-Orthodox demonstrators about the role of religion.

A 55-year-old mother of four who introduced herself only as Yael tossed a package of pasta and a jar of sweet-and-sour sauce into her basket. "We didn't really need anything," she

admitted. "We only came to show support." Abergil, who also owns a small round-the-clock convenience store in Jerusalem's secular Talpiot neighbourhood, said that he was not worried about the protesters.

"I have the right to live my life without them imposing on me," he said. Inspectors from the Labour ministry arrived Saturday and fined Abergil 500 shekels (\$120) for employing Jews on the Sabbath.

Britons challenge doctor's testimony at Yemen trial

ADEN (R) — Five British Muslims on trial in Yemen challenged a report by a government doctor who had examined them and insisted in court on Saturday that they had not been tortured.

The five, among six suspected Islamists, told the court they were hung upside-down and beaten on the soles of their feet.

Dr. Fouad Al Qahiri on Tuesday had told the court in Aden that he had examined the five on Jan. 15 while they were still under interrogation.

He said he found bruises on the suspects' wrists from handcuffs but that he did not find any evidence supporting defence claims that they were tortured.

It was not clear if the sixth suspect, an Algerian

with a French passport which French officials say is forged, had been examined by a doctor or not.

Defence lawyers had asked the court to dismiss charges against the suspects of plotting terrorist activity in Yemen on the grounds that their confessions were taken by force.

The defence had previously challenged the testimony by Qahiri, a physician who works at a government hospital in Yemen's southern city of Aden.

They said Qahiri's examination was not thorough and that he did not record the exact time of the examination.

The court presented the suspects with their handwritten confessions the prosecution said they had

made during interroga-

tion. The suspects confirmed to the court that the documents were in their own handwriting but said they were incomplete and that the written confessions had been taken under torture.

Four other suspects, including three British Muslims of Egyptian or Pakistani origin and one of Algerian origin, are also on trial on the same charges. They were arrested and charged after the trial of the first six began.

The court adjourned until Feb. 23.

All six men have pleaded not guilty to charges of forming an "armed gang to carry out a criminal plan to threaten the security of Yemen and carry

out terrorist acts of killing, sabotage and bombings." They are also accused of carrying weapons.

The prosecution says all six defendants are linked to Abu Hamza Al Masri, head of the London-based Supporters of Sharia (Islamic law) group, and to Abu Hassan, the self-confessed leader of the kidnappers of 16 Western tourists in December.

Four of the tourists — three Britons and an Australian — were killed when security forces stormed the hideout.

Yemen wants Britain to hand over Masri, but British officials say they have received no formal extradition request.

Iraq says it repulsed ground attack from Iran

DUBAI (AFP) — Iraq claimed on Saturday it had repulsed a ground attack by opposition forces from Iranian territory during the U.S.-British air war in December.

Vice President Taha Yassin Ramadan said in an interview with the United Arab Emirates' Al Khaleej daily that Iraqi opposition troops entered the south of Iraq on Dec. 18, the second day of missile strikes.

He said the plan was for "the Americans and British to lead intensive aerial raids and under this cover, ground troops supposedly from the opposition were to enter Iraqi soil, because

the Americans did not want to sacrifice their soldiers," Ramadan said.

On the first day of the aggression, they attacked the vital installations to isolate the south from the centre: communications, television and radio," he said. "On the second day, U.S. planes dropped notes to the army, telling the soldiers: 'If you don't fight against civilians, we will not attack you,' because they expected civilian demonstrations," he added.

"Those who call themselves the Islamic opposition entered from Iran. When they crossed the border, some gave them-

selves up when they saw the security situation, some fled and others were killed," Ramadan said.

He said the Iraqi authorities had "taken precautions because we knew they would try to carry out this plan through those who have lived far from Iraq for years," he said.

Ramadan also said there was a similar plan to infiltrate troops into northern Iraq, towards "Mosul, Kirkuk and other towns."

But he did not say if there had actually been troop incursions. An AFP photographer

visited southern Iraq on Dec. 20. He reported it looked like a military base, with heavy concentrations of soldiers and armed tribesmen in and around the southern port city of Basra.

The road leading into Basra was lined with heavy double-barrelled machine-guns and the armed tribesmen, called in by President Saddam to help defend the city.

Washington in October drew up the Iraqi liberation act providing \$97 million in military aid to Iraqi opposition groups as part of its efforts to oust Saddam.

Lebanese govt bogged down in political quagmire

BEIRUT (AFP) — The government of Lebanon's Prime Minister Salim Hoss, who took office last December, has been so beset by criticism that many now doubt his chances of success.

Exasperated by the wave of attacks, Hoss admitted last Sunday that his government of non-partisan technocrats has already made "major" mistakes, but he lashed out at critics he said had not even accorded his administration the traditional 100-day grace period.

"Although we stressed from the very beginning the heavy financial, economic and administrative burden we inherited and said we did not have a magic wand, our cabinet has been put under the microscope and is regarded as incapable just two months after it was put together," he told reporters.

He said his government had made two major errors — "halting the purges [of administrative officials] before they were complete and making appointments that were not successful."

After taking power in December, Hoss immediately embarked on a reform of the administration, sacking a number of top officials, particularly those close to former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri.

But bowing to pressure from politicians eager to keep their ability to reward followers with public positions, the government from the reform program after sacking 20 out of the administration's 72 top civil servants.

The sacked officials were mostly close allies of Hariri, former President Elias Hrawi and Druze leader Walid Jumblatt.

But Hoss then came under fire for stopping short of taking similar action against some of the most powerful associates of Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, a staunch ally of powerful neighbour Syria.

In a further embarrassment to Hoss, rivalries within the government have even recently been splashed on newspaper front-pages. Agriculture Minister Sulaiman Franjeh, one of the leading pro-Syrian Christian figures, recently publicly called Minister of Administrative Reforms Hassan Shalak "mentally deficient."

The bumpy administrative reform programme had initially been based on reports drafted by Shalak who chaired the Council of Civil Servants before becoming a government minister.

Close former allies of Hoss have also joined their voices to the growing uproar over the new government's performance.

"I have too rapidly granted my support to the government," former prime minister and northern Lebanon MP Omar Karamah said last week, accusing Hoss of neglecting Karamah's constituency, the main northern port city of Tripoli.

The influential MP Nassib Lahoud called on Hoss to "correct his mistakes," while another Hoss ally MP Boutros Harb called on the prime minister "not to follow Hariri's policies."

"If we intend to follow the same financial policy, it would have been better for Hariri to carry it out himself because he is better qualified to do it," Harb said, referring to recent plans to launch a new Eurobond issue in an attempt to widen investor interest.

In spite of the attacks, Hoss has denied he intends to resign.

The government, in a late session on Wednesday, entrusted the minister of administrative reform to "draft a report on the mistakes made in previous appointments and dismissals of civil servants."

The leading Al Nahar newspaper suggested the government may be given a "second chance" after acknowledging its mistakes.

JORDAN TELEVISION

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PROGRAMME TWO
Thursday/Friday Programmes

19:10News headlines
19:35Doc - Perspective
20:00 News in Arabic (Channel 2 links up with channel 1)
20:30 Programme on the late His Majesty King Hussein
21:00 Islamic History in Jordan
21:30On the Banks of Jordan
22:00News in English
22:10 Doc - National Geographic
23:00 News in Arabic (Channel 2 links up with channel 1)

PRAYER TIMES

04:51Fajr
06:09(Sunrise) Dhuha
11:49Dhuhr
15:00Asr
17:30Maghrib
18:47Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Swetfeth, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622366
Anglican Church Tel. 4624853/4624811
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 4771751
Armenian International Church Tel. 5865897

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 5811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4646138
Church of Presentation, Sweithel Tel. 5920146
The United Catholic Church Tel. 4624757
The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel. 4892679
The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052
The Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 4771331
The Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 4775261

Min./Max. temp.03/10
Amman10/19
Aqaba01/12
Deserts09/18
Jordan Valley09/18

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 08 Aqaba 18. Humidity readings: Amman 67 per cent, Aqaba 40 per cent.

Following are the temperatures expected today in the following areas:

Ajloun02/08
Jerash03/13
Um Qays03/12
Madaba02/10
Petra03/13
Dead Sea08/19

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Mukhlis Mazharah5103032
Dr. Wissam Hazyria4748363
Dr. Abdul Hadi Tayyem4620115
Dr. Farouq Nour5601719

AMMAN:
Firas Pharmacy5661912
Al Salam Pharmacy 4636730
Mayadah Pharmacy5537004
Ruh Al Dawa Pharmacy 5536169

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Cold weather conditions will prevail, skies partly cloudy, and winds northwesterly moderate. In Aqaba, skies will be partly cloudy, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

IRBID:
Dr. Issam Salih(02)246858
Fnu'ad Pharmacy(02)275360

ZARQA:
Dr. Mazen Saffarini(05)985832
Palestine Pharmacy(05)983562

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre4637111
Civil Defence Department5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue4630341
Civil Defence Emergency199
Rescue Police 192, 4621111, 4637777
Fire Brigade4617101
Blood Bank4775121
Highway Police5343402
Traffic Police4896390
Public Security Dept.4630321
Police Complaints5605800
Price Complaints5661176
Water & Sewerage Complaints487487
Arman Municipality Complaints7871111
Telephone Information (directory assistance)121
Overseas Calls0132

Central Amman Telephone Repairs4623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs5661101
Jordan Television4773111
Radio Jordan4774111
Water Authority5680100
J. Electricity Authority 5815615
Electric Power Co.4636381
RJ Flight Information. 44-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport. 44-53200

AMMAN:
Govt. Hospital(09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital(09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital(09)986731
Al Hikma Modern Hospital(09)990990

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital(02)275555
Roman Catholic Hospital(02)272275
Ibn Al Naftes Hospital

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery5921199
The Islamic, Abdli5666317
Husseini Medical Centre5856856
Luzmila4630195
Khaldi Maternity46442816
Alkhal Maternity46424112
Jabal Amman Maternity4642362
Malhas, J. Amman4636140
Palestine, Shmeisari5607071
Shmeisari Hospital5607431

Jordan Hospital5607550
University Hospital5353444
Al-Munshir Hospital5667279
Al-Ahli, Abdali56641646
Italian, Al-Mubajreen47770103
Al-Basit477511126
Army, Madna489161175
Queen Alia Hospital5157100
Amal Hospital5607155
Al Amal Cancer Centre5353000

ZARQA:
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FOR THE TRAVELLER QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) Information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44)53200 where it should always be verified. Information on other flights is obtained on telephone (44) 52700 or (44) 523250. Information on Royal Wings flights can be supplied on phone 4875201-5

18:25Madrid, Geneva (RJ)
19:40Frankfurt (RJ)
20:15Athens (RJ)
20:25Rome (RJ)
22:55Vienna, Aqaba (RJ)
23:59Cairo (RJ)

Other Flights
12:30Aden (TY)
14:35Istanbul (TK)
18:00Dubai, Damascus (EK)
18:40Beirut (ME)
18:45Kiev (6U)
19:05Paris (AF)
20:25Tel Aviv (LY)
20:40Cairo (MS)
22:25London, Damascus (BA)
23:35Amsterdam (KL)
23:55Larnaca (CY)
00:55Bucharest (RO)
02:00Rome (AZ)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights
07:50 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
10:30 Tel Aviv (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
16:00 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)
17:45 Haifa (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
18:45 Tel Aviv (arriving at QAIA) (RW)

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:15Bangkok, Doha (RJ)
08:00Jeddah (RJ)
08:25Bombay (RJ)
08:50Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
09:00Beirut (RJ)
09:50Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
16:45New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
17:40Paris (RJ)
17:45London (RJ)

ARRIVALS
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17:40Paris (RJ)
17:45London (RJ)

DEPARTURES
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
05:00Aqaba, Paris (add) (RJ)

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Home News

Jordan Times, Sunday, February 21, 1999 3

Princess aids accident victims

SWEIMEH (Petra) — Eleven people were injured in a four car pile-up in the Jordan Valley yesterday.

One of the vehicles was a rented car carrying a family from the Palestinian self-rule areas. The other three cars carried passengers from Jordan, according to eyewitnesses.

The accident occurred in the Sweimeh area of the valley. HRH Princess Basma, who was passing in the same area when the accident occurred, stopped to offer assistance and arrange for the victims to be transported to South Shuneh Hospital. Most of the victims were released after being treated. Those injured from the PNA areas in the rented vehicle were referred to Al Bashir Hospital in Amman.

And now the weather: Colder and drier

AMMAN (J.T.) — Cold and partly cloudy weather was forecast for today with temperatures expected to rise to a maximum of 10°C during the day, dropping to 3°C at night, with no more rain expected for the coming two days, meteorologists said Saturday.

The Department of Meteorology has cautioned motorists against slippery roads. Officials also said that frost formation in the badia and high mountains would cause patches in some areas and render visibility poor.

Rainfall over most regions of the country in the past two days has helped to partly replenish the Kingdom's dams.

Dhafer Alem, deputy secretary general of the Jordan Valley Authority (JVA), told the Jordan News Agency, Petra, that the reservoirs behind the dams collected 4.5 million cubic metres of rain water by 9:00 a.m. Saturday, and he expected an additional 3 million by the end of Saturday.

Alem said King Talal Dam, the largest in the country with a capacity of 75 million cubic metres, now holds 46 million cubic metres, while Wadi Arab Dam holds 11 mcm and Sharhabil 2.35 mcm.



An empty lot flooded by rainwater near University Road yesterday (photo by Yusef 'Allan)

Alem said the JVA will not allow water behind the dams to flow into the farmlands of the valley for the time being.

According to Agriculture Minister Mijhem Khreisha, the recent rains have saved the current agricultural season, but because the rains were late pasture lands, especially those located in the eastern badia regions of the Kingdom, received no benefit from the precipitation.

Khreisha said the country

has sustained JD150 million in losses due to the drought that preceded the rainfall.

He said a ministry team charged with estimating losses from the drought will submit a report on the situation to the ministry. Facts from the report will be presented to the World Food Programme in the hope of securing compensation and assistance for the ministry to deal with the problem.

Amman Mayor Nidal Hadid said after a tour of different

districts of Amman that there were no reports of accidents or flooding of homes as a result of the heavy rains.

He said municipality teams have been at work around the clock to ensure that culverts and manholes were functioning properly.

Hadid said no rain-related incidents were reported to the municipality's central operations room which was on call for emergencies around the clock.

'Iraq is keen to boost trade with Jordan' — Saleh

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — Visiting Iraqi Trade Minister Mohammad Mehdi Saleh said Saturday that his country was keen to boost trade with Jordan despite the recent reduction in trade volume between the two countries.

Saleh, who was addressing Jordanian industrialists during a meeting at the Amman Chamber of Industry, also said that his country was considering increasing its imports of Jordanian-made vegetable oil, in line with the oil for food agreement it signed with the United Nations.

"The relations between Jordan and Iraq are strategic and solid. Iraq will always remain supportive of the Kingdom through an expansion of cooperation. Iraq will spare no efforts to boost these ties," Saleh said.

In December, Jordan and Iraq agreed to cut the \$255 million trade protocol between the countries by \$65 million, following the decline in oil prices on world markets.

According to the protocol, Iraq was to supply the

Kingdom with its oil needs at preferential rates in exchange for food, medicine and other necessary items for its 23 million people.

The deal is exempted from the 1990 U.N. sanctions, imposed following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

Saleh urged the U.N. to activate Article 50 of its charter which stipulates that any country that is affected by sanctions on another country is permitted not to comply with these sanctions. He noted that Turkey was the only country to benefit from this particular article.

Saleh accused a U.N. commission of hindering trade contracts between Iraq and other countries.

According to the December 1997 oil-for-food agreement, Iraq is allowed to export \$2 billion worth of oil in exchange for food and medicine. The volume was since increased to \$5.2 billion.

But any contracts made between Iraq and other countries are subject to U.N. approval. Iraq has always accused the United

Nations of delaying these contracts.

The sanctions have cost Iraq more than \$140 billion, mostly incurred because of the ban on oil exports.

The minister, who arrived here from Sudan en route to Baghdad after a tour that included Egypt, also met with his Jordanian counterpart Mohammad Saleh Hourani.

The two officials agreed to hold a meeting of the Higher Committee in Baghdad late this month. The meeting was scheduled to take place earlier this month but postponed due to the death of His Majesty King Hussein.

The two countries are expected to sign the trade protocol for this year, which was concluded during a visit by a Jordanian delegation to the Iraqi capital in December.

During his meeting with Hourani, Saleh expressed his country's condolences over the death of His Majesty King Hussein. Iraq was represented by vice president Taha Muhiiddine Ma'arouf at the funeral of King Hussein.

'DEF projects create job opportunities' — study

By Hind-Lara Mango

AMMAN — The Ministry of Social Development is currently launching a comprehensive review of all micro-finance and lending institutions in the Kingdom to assess how effective they have been in reaching their target groups.

One such initiative tackled under the Social Productivity Programme Task Force on Micro-finance, was the analysis of the effectiveness of the Development and Employment Fund (DEF). In a study, considered to be the first of its kind in the region, the socioeconomic impact of DEF-funded projects was analysed at the beneficiary level by the Royal Scientific Society, the United Nations Development Programme, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, and DEF.

"The study concluded that only 50 per cent of DEF loans were existing loans, the rest were non-existing or loans in default, particularly agricultural loans," said Abila Amawi, senior programme officer at UNDP.

According to Director of Research and Planning at DEF, Radi Etoum, "this does not mean that DEF did not reach its target group of the poor and

unemployed." He said study findings showed that 50 per cent of DEF beneficiaries had gained an income of above JD200 a month from these projects.

"Study findings indicate that DEF projects are labour-intensive with each project providing an average of three job opportunities," Etoum told the Jordan Times.

He explained that since in most cases agricultural projects were defaulting, the DEF board of directors had decided to shift agricultural credit to the Agricultural Credit Corporation.

The study indicated a problem in the management, utilisation and targeting of loans.

Responding to study recommendations, DEF began a restructuring programme this month.

"We have launched new strategies pertaining to loan conditions and interest rates," Etoum said.

DEF is a development financing institution, which has spent JD23 million on approximately six thousand projects during the 10 years it has been in existence. It aims to alleviate the adverse effects of structural adjustment programmes.

The fund strives to enable poor, low-income and unemployed individuals and families to start

productive projects through direct and indirect loans, rehabilitation, and technical assistance.

The study recommended that DEF raise its interest rate to cover its operational costs.

"We have drawn up new lending strategies. For example, the interest rate for direct loans has been increased to 9 per cent annually for the initiation of projects," Etoum said.

The most debated issue in the micro-finance sector in Jordan has been the increase in interest rates to cover cost. Since DEF previously charged an interest rate "way below" the commercial rate, and it is a poverty alleviation programme, it should work through NGOs and focus on indirect lending to achieve cost recovery," Amawi said.

In a recent interview with the Jordan Times, Amawi said: "We proposed indirect lending rather than direct lending as the latter involves large-scale operating requirements; restructuring of the management and lending programme to adopt a best practices approach in terms of outreach, sustainability, and cost recovery."

According to official estimates, unemployment in the country stands at 16 per cent, an independent

put the rate at close to 27 per cent. Poverty rates are 15 per cent officially and 30 per cent independently.

As in other lending institutions in Jordan, DEF reflects a low percentage of female borrowers. This can be attributed to the fact that women do not have enough guarantors to support their application for loans, as any loan requires a guarantor or collateral.

The study revealed that these loans had positive socio-economic results on gender and the changing roles within the family.

"Of the financed projects only 32 per cent of them went to females," Etoum said.

He pointed out that DEF was going to sign an agreement with the General Federation of Jordanian Women for a JD1 million loan to finance women's projects only.

"We are now cooperating with many NGOs who have women as their target group," Etoum said.

"New approaches should be adopted towards the gender mainstreaming of projects and gender impact at the beneficiary level," Amawi said.

At the beneficiary level it was found that loan recipients had had no training, and had not been given any business support. They had not even

conducted feasibility studies for their projects.

"There was no real follow-up. DEF does not have the capacity to follow up on every single project they finance," Amawi said.

According to Etoum, DEF is currently working on "separate collection and follow-up units so that follow-up activities will focus on diagnosing problems and on rendering technical assistance to overcome them."

Beneficiaries usually go through a lengthy bureaucratic process when requesting a loan from DEF. But Amawi said, "This can be fixed, the basic problem was that DEF could not cover its operation costs."

By the same token it was noted that some of the NGOs handling DEF loans did not achieve total cost recovery at the end of the day as they faced the same sort of obstacles witnessed by DEF in terms of sustainability.

"When we restructure this sector as a whole, all these issues have to be tackled simultaneously," said Amawi.

She said, "Attempts are now being made at restructuring the entire sector in terms of micro-finance practices in Jordan."

Proposed King Hussein memorial award to reward humanitarian/scientific efforts

By Susan Resheq

AMMAN — The Greater Municipality of Amman is considering offering a \$100,000 annual memorial award for scientific and humanitarian achievements in memory of His Majesty King Hussein, said Amman Mayor Nidal Hadid.

The proposed award, entitled "The Hussein Creative Scientific and Humanitarian Award," would be open to applicants from Jordan and other Arab countries, the mayor said.

He said the final rules and

fields of interest of the award have not yet been determined, but its establishment will occur within the 40 days of the passing away of King Hussein.

Hadid said the award would be granted in one of two categories: 1) for achievements in the literary, scientific or Arab city fields, or 2) for achievements in the literary or Arab cities areas.

The field covering Arab cities will, in turn, be divided into three branches.

Awards granted for the best and most beautiful building erected in an Arab city; prizes granted for the best planning

for an Arab city; and awards granted for the best environmental achievement.

"An Arab committee will be formed to supervise the awards activity; the committee will include well-known Arab personalities, respected at both the national and international levels," Hadid said.

Hussein Hamoudi, public relations manager at the Greater Amman Municipality said details of the prize will be announced as soon as the municipality council completes its study of the awards' rules and fields.

Mamser appointed acting minister of culture

AMMAN (Petra) — A Royal Decree was issued on Saturday appointing Mohammad Khair Mamser as acting minister of culture and youth during the absence of Minister of Culture and Youth Talal Sata'an Al Hassan who led a Jordanian delegation to the Algerian meetings for ministers of youth.

WFP donates 8,000 tonnes of wheat

AMMAN (Petra) — The World Food Programme (WFP) has agreed to donate 8000 tonnes of wheat to the

Briefs

Kingdom in 1999 as direct food aid to the country's farmers, according to Hashem Shiboul, the agriculture ministry's secretary general, yesterday. Speaking upon his return to Amman from a WFP meeting held in Rome between Feb.15 and 18, Shiboul said the decision was taken after the Jordanian delegation had presented a general report about the agricultural sector in Jordan and obstacles obstructing cooperation between Jordan and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). Shiboul said discussions were held with IFAD over plans to help Jordan increase its food

production and found positive response from IFAD and readiness to help Jordan overcome the consequences of the drought through providing farmers with compensation in the form of food and through soft long-term loans to stock breeders.

Cultural cancellations

The following cultural centres in Amman have suspended all cultural activities for the month of February:

*Dar al Furun
French Cultural Centre
Goethe Institute
Instituto Cervantes
The British Council*

Royal Protocol: Tireless officers behind the scenes

By Caroline Faraj

AMMAN — Protocol officers at the Royal Hashemite Court are working round-the-clock to cope with thousands of Jordanians streaming to the Palace every day to visit the tomb of the late King Hussein and to sign a condolence register.

Officials said the office has also been receiving scores of requests from visiting tourists, schools and families to organise mass visits to the grave of His Majesty, who died after a seven-month battle with cancer on Feb.7 and was laid to rest following a state funeral, a day after.

Many of the visitors flocking to the grave are Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza Strip and Israeli Arabs who are making a one-day journey to Amman to pay homage to the late King, the region's longest serving ruler.

"If palace doors were open 24 hours a day, people would still line up to get in," said a protocol officer. "What we are experiencing is an amazing outpouring of emotions at home and abroad."

However, protocol officials said in private they have passed the challenge of having to arrange for the late King's funeral, which witnessed a rare gathering of

world leaders.

"The challenge was to set aside our state of shock, to arrange for the funeral in less than 24 hours and to meet the needs of an unexpected flow of world leaders who wanted to be here to bid a final farewell to a great leader and human," added the official, who requested anonymity.

Chief of Royal Protocol Ayman Majali, who spent much of the last seven months with King Hussein during his treatment at the Mayo Clinic, in Rochester, Minnesota, had organised numerous visits by local, Arab and international leaders and dignitaries who arrived in the U.S. to wish the King well.

But with the passing of King Hussein who suffered a fatal relapse only a week after his return to the Kingdom on Jan. 19, arrangements for the funeral required that Majali's team, in coordination with the Jordan Armed Forces, meet several important challenges, including a method by which antagonists such as Syria and Israel, the U.S. and Iraq, whose leaders or representatives were arriving in Amman to attend the funeral, would be kept apart.

"We took into consideration all the differences between our foreign digni-

ties," said Deputy Chief of Protocol Faisal Al Fayez.

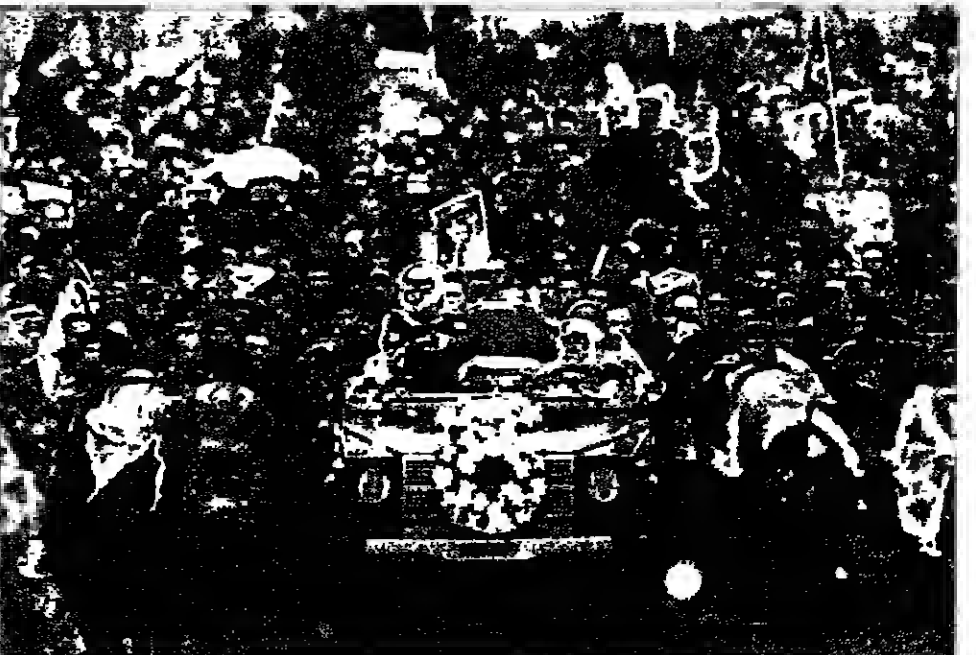
"We followed a separation rule throughout the procession, putting all Arab delegates together and the rest, including the Israelis, in the other group. Everything went smoothly."

In fact, many instances were recorded of international figures, whose countries are regarded as in conflict with each other, making contact. One prime example was the contact between Syrian President Hafez Assad and U.S. President Bill Clinton.

As one protocol officer put it, "the fact that all these delegations came to mourn His Majesty brought everyone together, putting aside their differences in the solemnity of the event and the regard they held for the late King."

Over 50 presidents and emirs, representatives of Europe's main royal families and other leading politicians, walked shoulder to shoulder with more than 1,000 Jordanian officials, tribal leaders and other dignitaries behind the King's casket as it made its way to the Royal cemetery inside the downtown complex of palaces.

"It was not easy to list the names of the local dignitaries who attended the King's



'I just told myself I was on duty for a Royal event that King Hussein was attending and not for his funeral,' said one tearful Royal Guard (photo by Yusef 'Allan)

funeral, because every one in Jordan wanted to be part of the list that exceeded 1,000 names," Fayez said.

Most Amman-based diplomats said they were impressed with the funeral arrangements, including official receptions at the airport, transport to the Palace, meetings with His Majesty King Abdullah and Her Majesty

Queen Noor and the prompt departures of 86 private jets which crowded the tarmac of the Queen Alia International Airport.

Having to deal with journalists and the foreign media posed another challenge.

"We had to satisfy the needs of over 1,200 foreign journalists, cameramen and photographers who con-

verged on Jordan to cover the developments," said another Royal Court official.

The army experienced its biggest ever deployment since the 1988 Arab summit to ensure the safety of visitors.

The Royal Guard, sporting their green berets and charged with providing security for the Royal family and

their residences, found their mission different this time.

"We always arranged for His Majesty's family and guests. This time, we had to arrange for King Hussein."

The forces had to protect the passage of the King's cortege before one million grieving Jordanians who lined the street of Amman from the King's Palace to the cemetery to pay their last respects to their leader who had ruled for 47 years.

They worked in tandem with an operations room set up at the Royal Court to prepare for the unprecedented funeral. "We wanted everything to go perfectly as the late King always wanted us to do," said Fayez.

According to the foreign dignitaries' list of participants at the funeral, there were 33 heads of state, 11 crown princes/vice presidents, 10 prime ministers, 6 foreign ministers, 4 other ministers, 16 ambassadors and 17 other dignitaries.

Army officers and soldiers, mainly from the King's Royal Guards, headed by Colonel Hussein Majali, stood stoically throughout the procession preparations and the five-hour funeral.

"I just told myself to consider that I was on duty for a Royal event that King Hus-

sein is attending and not for his funeral," a tearful member of the Royal Guards told the Jordan Times during the procession.

"We all feel that we have lost our father," said another. For the three official days of condolences following the funeral Royal Protocol organised the flow of more than 100,000 people who arrived at Raghadan and Zahran Palaces to offer sympathies to the Royal family.

"About 18,000 men per day offered their condolences to His Majesty King Abdullah and the Royal family members at Raghadan Palace," said Fayez, adding that "also about 10,000 women per day came to Zahran Palace to offer Her Majesty Queen Noor and other Royal family members their condolences as well."

The protocol team continues to work long hours responding to the constant flood of letters of condolences pouring in daily to the Royal Court. They all say that they are deeply touched by the kindness of people who have written from every corner of the world, and that somehow their words of solace have helped to comfort them in their own sorrow.

Indian PM arrives for talks in Pakistan

WAGAH, Pakistan (R) — Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee arrived in Pakistan by bus Saturday to an official welcome for his fence-mending visit and protests by thousands demanding he go home and withdraw his troops from Kashmir.

Vajpayee, inaugurating a bus service which is supposed to ease suspicion by the two newly nuclear states, was greeted at the Wagah border crossing by Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif with whom he will hold two days of talks.

"I am conscious that this is a defining moment in south Asian history," Vajpayee said on his arrival. "And I hope we will be able to rise to the challenge."

Pakistani Information Minister Mushahid Hussain told reporters the upgrading of talks from diplomat level showed a willingness to defuse decades of enmity.

"There is political will at the highest level to solve the issues which divide our two countries," he told reporters.

Asked if the talks would succeed or be mere symbolism, he replied: "Success means we are not shooting

at each other, we are not shouting at each other, success means we are talking to each other," he said.

"We have to stop worrying about the past," said Hussain as the two leaders prepared to leave by helicopter for Lahore.

As Vajpayee arrived at Wagah to a red-carpet welcome, thousands of Islamists marched to the centre of Lahore, the summit venue, to demand that India get its army out of the disputed Himalayan region of Kashmir, where thousands have died in sectarian and political violence.

Vajpayee's bus was preceded across the border by a troupe of Indian dancers before it reached a white line in no-man's land marking the frontier between the two old enemy states.

Sharif and Vajpayee embraced inside Pakistan, symbolising the hope that the summit would launch two bitterly divided states into a new era of peace and cooperation.

The land border is normally sealed to all but foreign nationals, underlying the mutual suspicion which has escalated into three wars, two of them over Kashmir.

Riot police lined the road to Wagah and were deployed all over Lahore to quell disturbances which began Friday and carried on through Saturday.

Paramilitary rangers were drafted into Lahore after three people were wounded in clashes in which tear gas and live rounds were fired to disperse demonstrators incensed that Muslim Pakistan was playing host to a Hindu leader.

Lahore residents said security had been stepped up in the city, especially near the governor's residence, and the two hotels hosting 250 visiting Indian journalists and the retinues of Pakistani and Indian officials.

Islamabad routinely accuses Indian intelligence of fomenting violence in Pakistan which has killed thousands in recent years. India denies the charges.

Pakistan says the key to easing 50 years of mistrust with its powerful neighbour is a peaceful settlement over Kashmir, which is two-thirds ruled by India and the rest by Pakistan.

At least 22 people were reported killed in Kashmir Friday and Saturday in the run-up to the talks.



Pakistani youths burn an effigy of Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee during a rally in downtown Karachi. The rally was organised by the Shabab-e-Mill party to protest against Vajpayee's visit to Pakistan. Vajpayee reached the border city of Lahore Saturday and was warmly received by his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif as both leaders aim at lessening tension between the two nuclear rivals (Reuters photo)

China, Pakistan discuss greater military ties

ISLAMABAD (R) — Long-time allies, China and Pakistan discussed military ties Saturday and their ministers were quoted as saying they wanted to enhance their defence cooperation.

Chinese Defence Minister Chi Haotian met Pakistani Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz at the start of a five-day visit.

A Pakistani government statement quoted him as expressing the hope that his visit would "further strengthen the already (existing) friendly and time-tested relations between the two countries and their armed forces and would result in further enhancement of cooperation in defence field".

Aziz expressed Pakistan's "resolve to continue close cooperation with China in all fields, including the defence and security," the statement said.

The statement did not say if any specific areas of military cooperation were discussed.

China has been supplying military hardware to Pakistan, including fighter aircraft and battle tanks, since the 1960s.

Chi, who arrived in Islamabad Friday night on the first leg of a three-nation trip, is also due to meet Pakistani President Mohammad Rafiq Tarar, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, armed forces chiefs and attend a naval defence show in Karachi.

"My current visit is aimed at enhancing mutual understanding and trust, promoting friendship and cooperation, and strengthening the comprehensive partnership of cooperation towards the 21st century between our two countries and two armed forces," he said in a statement on arrival.

The Chinese minister arrived a day before Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee of India, which has had decades of strained relations with both Beijing and Islamabad, was to make a historic cross-border bus trip to Pakistan.

Chi and Aziz discussed the south Asian security situation in the light of fit-for-tat nuclear tests by India and Pakistan, last May, according to the Pakistani statement.

Aziz, the statement said, expressed the hope that Vajpayee's February 20-21 visit would "pave the way for a substantive dialogue on all outstanding (India-Pakistan) issues", including their dispute on the Himalayan region of Jammu and Kashmir.

China openly supported Pakistan on the Kashmir question in the 1960s and 1970s but appeared to be avoiding taking sides in recent years while Beijing and New Delhi moved to end years of tensions between them since their brief border war in 1962.

India rules two-thirds of Kashmir, where it is fighting a separatist revolt by Muslim militants seeking independence or union with Pakistan, which controls the remaining third.

Three hurt in Pakistan protests against Vajpayee

LAHORE (R) — Three students were injured Saturday as clashes erupted between security forces and Muslim activists protesting against a trip to Pakistan by Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee.

Witnesses said police stopped a bus carrying student demonstrators to Lahore and shots and teargas rounds were fired. At least three of the bus occupants were injured.

Scattered clashes were reported between police and demonstrators who tried to erect blazing barricades to disrupt the visit by Vajpayee.

"God is great. Burn down the Indian parliament," the demonstrators chanted, before being moved on by a security presence which grew as the clock ticked towards Vajpayee's arrival.

There were no welcoming banners for Vajpayee in the streets of the city. Not a single Indian flag was seen.

Militants of the Jamaat-i-Islami Islamic group roamed

the city waving black banners of protest, urging residents to join in further demonstrations planned for the afternoon.

Half the city's shops shut in response to a strike call, from conservative Muslim groups who see the weekend summit as a sellout of their political and religious claims to the bitterly disputed Himalayan region of Kashmir.

The strike call was issued by right-wing Islamic groups who want no compromise to Pakistan's insistence that the people of Kashmir be allowed to vote in a U.N. plebiscite to determine their future.

Lahore residents said security was stepped up in the city, especially near the governor's residence, where the talks will take place.

Pakistan says the key to easing 50 years of mistrust with its powerful neighbour is a peaceful settlement over Kashmir, which is two-thirds ruled by India and the

rest by Pakistan.

Pakistani officials say the dispute over Kashmir, which India says is an integral part of its territory, is at the top of the talks' agenda.

But few expect a breakthrough to a dispute which Islamabad says is a flash-point between the two countries, which both carried out nuclear tests in May last year.

Pakistani officials say all disputes are on the table for the talks and that confidence-building measures to lessen the risk of a nuclear confrontation could be agreed by the two premiers by the time their formal talks end Sunday afternoon.

"This region has been left behind, very severely left behind," Pakistan Foreign Ministry spokesman Tariq Atiat told a late night Friday news briefing.

"It is time we created an environment for peace and security and strengthened the stability of the region," he added.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Nuclear reactor stopped at Ukraine's largest atomic plant

KIEV, Ukraine (AP) — A nuclear reactor at Ukraine's largest atomic power plant was stopped Saturday for lengthy planned repairs, officials said. Reactor No. 6 at the Zaporizhia plant will also be loaded with new fuel rods before coming back on line April 23, said the state nuclear regulatory administration. Zaporizhia, some 640 kilometres southeast of the capital Kiev, has six Soviet-designed VVER-1000 reactors — considered to be more reliable than the RBMK reactor of the type that operate at Ukraine's Chernobyl nuclear power plant. Still, several dozen malfunctions were reported at the plant's reactors in 1998, and they were often under repair last year. Ukraine relies heavily on its five nuclear power plants, which account for more than 40 per cent of the former Soviet Republic's electricity production.

Indian villagers invite Nawaz Sharif to his birthplace

JATI UMRA, India (AP) — Swelling with pride, hundreds of farmers in the village where Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was born sent a letter to him Saturday, hailing his efforts to promote peace between India and Pakistan, and inviting him to visit. Residents of Jati Umra village in Punjab state, nearly 40 kilometers gathered in local Sikh temple Saturday and in the house the prime minister's ironsmith father, Mian Sharif Mohammad, lived in decades ago before migrating to the western part of undivided India, which later became part of the newly carved out Muslim nation of Islamabad. Sharif spent his childhood in the village, studying in the local schools with many elders who gathered at his residence. Friday, village headman Zail Singh handed over to local officials a framed letter that Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee has promised to carry to Sharif when he crosses the border on a historic bus ride. "He lives in our heart and there is great respect for him in this village," said Arjan Singh, 83, a friend of his father.

Snow traps thousands in Europe, flood alert in Belgium

VIENNA (AFP) — Thousands of holiday-makers were trapped in Austria, Switzerland and central France Saturday after heavy snowfalls cut off ski resorts where avalanche threats blocked roads. In Austria, thousands of people, mostly tourists, were trapped in resorts in the mountains of the Tyrol and the Vorarlberg in the west of the country amid fears of avalanches, local police said. Heavy snowfall and rain in recent days have increased the risk of avalanches, leaving many roads impassable. More than 13,000 tourists were stranded in the Paznaun valley in the Vorarlberg region but were due to leave their holiday homes later in the day. An avalanche cut off the main east-west rail route early Saturday, although bus services replaced the cancelled trains. In Switzerland, hundreds of people were trapped in the Alpine regions around Bern, Adelboden and Grindelwald in the centre of the country after heavy snows posed the serious risk of avalanches. Authorities said the north-south Gothard tunnel would be closed until Sunday, blocking a number of trucks on access roads. An avalanche also cut rail connections to the town of Bex in the south. In the north of the country heavy rains and snowmelt caused flooding in the area around Basel and Aarau and police said the river Rhine was rising steadily, although no alert has yet been sounded. In the French Haute-Savoie mountains, access to the ski resorts of Morzine and Avoriaz was cut as snow choked the roads to the area, traffic organisations said. Meanwhile in Belgium, heavy rain and thawing snow threatened flooding Saturday, with the area around Liege in the northeast on flood alert, local authorities said. Firefighters were also called out overnight to rescue two people stranded on the roof of their car in Verviers 20 kilometres southwest of Liege.

Quake rocks Taiwan, no damage reported

TAIPEI (R) — An earthquake measuring 5.9 on the Richter scale hit southern Taiwan Saturday, but there were no immediate reports of damage, officials said. A central weather bureau statement said the quake's epicentre was 51 km east of Taiwan's southeastern island of Lanyu and some 199.5 km beneath the earth's surface. There were no immediate reports of damage or casualties from the tremor, an interior ministry spokesman said by telephone. The quake was felt in most of the island's southern region, with its highest magnitude on land at two on the Richter scale in the southern city of Kaohsiung. Earthquakes are relatively common in Taiwan and rarely cause severe damage.

Nestlé urges caution over nutty ice-cream

LONDON (AFP) — Swiss food giant Nestlé has warned people allergic to hazelnuts not to eat one of its ice-creams on sale here, which fails to mention it contains them. The off-flavoured ice-cream, which is made in Germany, is being sold at convenience stores and gas stations in Britain and the Republic of Ireland, but not in large supermarkets, the company said. "Anyone who is not allergic to hazelnuts can continue to enjoy this product," a Nestlé spokesman said. "However, the small number of people who do suffer hazelnut allergy must not eat this ice cream and should dispose of it." The company also said the batch consisted of 17,000 containers, of which they still have 2,000 in stock. It added that the remaining 15,000 had been sold, "and most will probably already have been consumed safely."

Armed bandits kill 12, wound 20 in northeastern Kenya

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — Heavily armed bandits killed at least 12 people, including seven police officers, in an ambush attack on a bus in northeastern Kenya, newspapers reported Saturday. The attack happened Friday outside Garissa, about 210 miles northeast of Nairobi, where thieves sprayed the bus with gunfire during a holdup, the east African Standard reported. At least 20 people were wounded, some seriously. The officers were killed when the bandits also attacked a vehicle the police were escorting behind the bus, local police chief Maurice Makhanu told the Daily Nation. He said the thieves shot out the tires of the bus and engaged in a gun battle with the arriving police. The bandits robbed the bus passengers before fleeing into the thick brush. Police reinforcements and military personnel were sent to the area to hunt for the bandits. Makhanu said.

Cambodia students call off trial protest

PHNOM PENH (R) — Cambodian students demanding that Khmer Rouge leaders be put on trial called off a march planned for Sunday after warnings from authorities that their rally was illegal and might be broken up with force.

"We're not going to hold a rally tomorrow because we've heard that the government will crack down on U.S." student leader Saro Sivutha told Reuters Saturday.

The students had earlier called for a rally and march through Phnom Penh Sunday to demand that leaders of the Khmer Rouge, held responsible for the deaths of more than a million people during their 1975-79 rule, be brought to justice.

Saro Sivutha said the students were giving the government more time to demonstrate their commitment to bringing Khmer Rouge leaders to trial.

"We'll give the government more time to bring them to trial but if they don't do it we'll protest for sure," he said.

Calls for the ageing leaders of the radical leftist group to face trial have mounted since two of them surrendered to

the government in late December, appealing to be allowed to live out their lives as ordinary citizens.

Prime Minister Hun Sen has given mixed signals regarding his views on whether they should be brought to justice.

All surviving Khmer Rouge leaders but one, military chief Ta Mok, are living freely in Cambodia while the government ponders their fate and awaits the recommendations of a team of U.N.-appointed jurists.

The team, led by Sir Ninian Stephen, a judge and former governor-general of Australia, is due to present its views on a Khmer Rouge trial to U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan within days. It is expected to recommend some form of tribunal.

Hun Sen, a former junior Khmer Rouge officer who broke away in 1977, has said a trial for Khmer Rouge leaders might not be in the interests of national reconciliation and could spark fresh fighting.

But he has also told top U.N. officials that he backs the U.N. team's efforts to set up a tribunal for the crimes committed during Khmer Rouge rule from 1975-79.

U.S. attorney general asked to look into whether Starr lied in U.S. House testimony

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Democratic lawmaker wants Attorney General Janet Reno to look into whether independent counsel Kenneth Starr lied under oath to the House Judiciary Committee's impeachment hearings last year.

In a letter to Reno, Rep. Barney Frank of Massachusetts criticised Starr's answer to a question from Frank about alleged grand jury leaks from Starr's office.

The questioning occurred last Nov. 19 as the committee was considering impeaching President Bill Clinton on the basis of Starr's report about his liaison with former White House intern Monica Lewinsky.

"Given the way Mr. Starr has treated people who have got in his way in this investigation ... if he were investigating himself in this matter he would have almost certainly charged himself with perjury," Frank said Friday.

"I do not wish to follow Mr. Starr's example of using perjury as a political tool. But I do think ... his disregard of the truth in

testifying under oath ... directly relevant to his fitness to continue as independent counsel."

Friday, Frank released his Feb. 11 letter to Reno. Meantime, justice department officials continued to weigh how to proceed with an investigation of Starr's Lewinsky probe.

Justice officials wrote to Starr recently stating their intention to launch such an inquiry but have held off beginning it pending resolution of issues raised by his response, officials have said.

Questioning whether the justice department should be investigating him, Starr has proposed that an outside counsel handle the inquiry rather than the department's internal watchdog agency, the office of professional responsibility.

It was learned that the consideration of Starr's demand for an outside counsel is still in a preliminary stage in the department.

The independent counsel act gives Reno authority to remove Starr for good cause and requires her to explain her reasons in writ-

ing to Congress. Some department officials have argued that implies that she has authority to investigate Starr.

Thursday, Deputy Attorney General Eric Holder said: "We would leave all of our options open as to who might do such an investigation if one were to be done."

Reno herself has been out of the country all week on official trips to Mexico and South Africa and has not been able to meet with Starr to discuss the matter, as he requested, it was learned.

Last Friday, Holder met with Republican Sen. Orrin Hatch of Utah, who backed Starr's bid for an outside investigator. Holder told Hatch the department was trying to reach an accommodation with Starr, according to people familiar with the closed-door meeting.

Starr has suggested former Carter administration Attorney General Griffin Bell as a possible candidate for the job, the New York Times reported Friday.

Publicly, no one in the department or Starr's

office would address the sensitive issue.

Nor did Starr's office respond to a call seeking his comment on Frank's allegation.

In his letter to Reno, Frank noted that Starr claimed he was hampered in answering Frank's question about leaks because "I am operating under a sealed proceeding."

Frank then asked: "Sealed at your request, correct?"

"No, Mr. Frank," Starr replied. "It is sealed by the chief judge based upon her determination of ... at that point, Frank interrupted with another question."

Frank noted that U.S. District Judge Norma Holloway Johnson had since unsealed court documents, filed before Starr's testimony, in which Starr's office wrote: "The office of the independent counsel urges the court to keep the order under seal until the conclusion of the investigation by the special master and findings by this court."

Johnson had named a special master to investigate alleged grand jury leaks by Starr's office.

Blast in Peru

ALICANTO, Spain (AP) — A bomb exploded through a window of a party plant in Alicante, Spain, Saturday, killing one person and wounding three others. The blast occurred at a night club where people were dancing. The explosion was heard from several blocks away.

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Soyuz TM-12 spacecraft blasts off from the Baikonur Cosmodrome, Russia launched what could be the last crew to the Mir space station — a Russian, a Frenchman and a Slovak (Reuters photo)

Blast rocks plant in Pennsylvania

ALLENTOWN, Pennsylvania (AP) — An explosion tore through a chemical company plant in eastern Pennsylvania, injuring at least eight people and trapping as many as four others under rubble and steel beams, authorities said.

The blast Friday night sent a gas cloud over the area and authorities warned residents to stay inside until they determined it was harmless. One of the injured was in critical condition.

Lehigh county executive Jane Baker said at least one woman was trapped and there may be three more people inside. She said rescue workers had been able to communicate with the woman.

"It's very difficult because the victims are under large pieces of steel and they're trying to lift those pieces of steel and get

them out," she said.

A police helicopter using infrared equipment searched overhead and rescue workers dug through the rubble. County emergency director John Conklin said it appeared bleak for those missing.

"The remains of the building are unstable and they're doing it (the search) carefully and methodically," he said. "They are digging through the debris with small hand tools."

The injured included three people in an office across the street from the Concept Sciences Inc. building. People three kilometres from the Lehigh Valley airport industrial park reported seeing a large blue flash.

"I was working on my computer and I felt a big boom and the whole house shook and the windows sounded like a big gust of wind was coming in," said Tracy Miklus, who lives

about eight kilometres from the site.

"We looked outside and we could see a big cloud just going over the city," authorities did not immediately know what the chemical was and ordered people within one mile of the explosion to stay indoors.

Conklin said authorities believed the plant was processing the chemical hydroxylamine, used for processing salt in water heaters when the explosion occurred.

He said the gas posed no danger. Another chemical, potassium hydroxide, was also involved, officials said.

Debris was strewn over the blast area about five kilometres northeast of Allentown in eastern Pennsylvania. Only portions of the steel framework remained; nearby buildings had shattered windows and torn siding.

Britain highlighting homes of some less traditional residents

LONDON (AP) — A distinction once largely reserved for the historic homes of poets and politicians, Britain is increasingly issuing blue commemorative plaques to mark the former abodes of the nation's more offbeat residents.

Geoff Noble of the English Heritage, the government agency that selects homes for the honour, said the agency is interested in going beyond the usual recipients. Even despots and rock stars are considered.

"We do certainly encourage variety. In fact we've got such a preponderance of poets and politicians, we're always keen to see new people suggested," Noble said.

To be chosen for the honour, a home's owner must have been born at least 100 years ago or be dead for at least 20 years.

John Lennon is due to get a plaque in his native Liverpool next year, on the 20th

anniversary of his death.

Also under consideration for a plaque is the former London homes of Kenyan President Jomo Kenyatta, praised by some as the man who helped free Africa from British rule.

Markers also have been proposed for American poet Sylvia Plath and independent Ghana's first President Kwame Nkrumah, who is accused by human rights groups of rounding up and detaining opponents while in power.

"We aren't looking for saints and angels," Noble said. "We don't comb through people's private lives."

But there are some limits. Noble said the former home of someone "very villainous" probably would not be granted a plaque since English heritage must receive the current homeowner's approval before erecting the blue-and-white sign.

A panel of six historians, journalists and museum officials who consider the public's recommendations are now especially interested in military heroes, sports personalities, scientists, engineers and entertainers, Noble said.

Currently, London boasts 762 plaques, and English Heritage hopes to expand the programme across the country, said spokeswoman Joanne Fennie.

More than 100 nominations come in each year, with about a dozen selected for the honour.

Among the more famous honourees are Jimi Hendrix — The First Rock Star To Join The List — Whose Home At No. 23 Brook Street, in Ritz Mayfair, was decorated in 1997. Other famous names on the plaques include Karl Marx, Winston Churchill, and Virginia Woolf.

Chavez's plan to give military high profile provoking fears

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — The president's plan to give the army a bigger role in running Venezuela is provoking fears of a return to the days of repressive military regimes in one of Latin America's oldest democracies.

President Hugo Chavez says Venezuela's 120,000-member armed forces and former coup plotters like himself can help this oil-rich nation overcome its economic troubles and bring order to a chaotic, corruption-riddled government.

The leader of a failed 1992 coup attempt who took office Feb. 2, Chavez has named fellow coup participants to top posts including Caracas governor, transportation minister, secret police chief and taxation head.

He also appointed two active army colonels to key positions in the huge state oil monopoly, Petroleos de Venezuela.

One former coup plotter

was elected president of the senate and another was reelected governor of Zulia state in the heart of Venezuela's oil belt.

Chavez also has announced that he will boost the role of the army in everyday life, dispatching thousands of soldiers to improve roads, build schools and cultivate farms.

The moves have not been welcomed by all Venezuelans.

"We are going down a very dangerous path. The new president is a military populist," said political scientist Anibal Romero.

Other critics say Chavez's plans are sending the wrong message at a time when Latin America's fragile democracies are struggling to keep the military in their barracks and out of politics.

The former paratrooper's actions are "an invitation to greater politicisation of the military, which is precisely what led to some of the worst aspects of the authoritarian period in Latin America," said Michael

Shifter, a senior fellow at Inter-American Dialogue, a think tank in Washington, D.C.

But Chavez dismisses such concerns. "The armed forces should be prepared to work for the development, the peace, the progress of our people," he said at a Feb. 4 gala military parade marking the seventh anniversary of his failed putsch.

During the parade, the new president ordered former coup participants from two military rebellions in 1992 back into the ranks of the armed forces, calling them "heroes."

Military dictatorships and repressive civilian regimes ruled most of Latin America until the 1980s, killing, torturing and making thousands of people disappear. Today, all except Cuba have democratically elected governments, but in many the military still wields great power.

"The subordination of the military to civilian rule, which everybody thought

would take place after the cold war ended, is far from being achieved and may be going in the wrong direction," says Shifter.

Chavez already has raised worries that he may become an army-backed "caudillo" or political strongman, similar to Peru's Alberto Fujimori.

On his first day in office, Chavez issued a presidential decree for a national vote on forming a constituent assembly to write a new constitution — with Chavez deciding how assembly delegates would be chosen. And this week, he issued what many thought was a veiled warning of violence if the supreme court tries to torpedo the decree.

The moves have provoked intense criticism from opposition parties, intellectuals and even a few Chavez supporters.

At his rallies, supporters don his trademark red paratrooper's beret — a militaristic image that worries some Venezuelan democ-

rats. At one event last week, Chavez himself appeared in combat fatigues. He often praises Venezuela's last dictator, 85-year-old Marcos Perez Jimenez, who built highways, bridges, tunnels and housing projects.

Many Venezuelans fed up with skyrocketing crime, rampant corruption and failing public services support Chavez's plans for a growing role for the military, which they view as one of the few institutions that still works.

"We see it as something positive," said Raul Cubas, director of Provea, a leading Venezuelan human rights group, adding that the group obviously would oppose any repression by the armed forces.

He says Venezuela's military is better trained than most in Latin America, with many officers holding university degrees, and that in other countries military units such as the U.S. Army corps of engineers carry out useful public projects.

Mystery man claims key to Diana crash

PARIS (R) — A man who says he is the owner of a mysterious car involved in the Paris crash that killed Princess Diana is claiming the hefty reward offered for information, lawyers said Saturday.

The lawyers for Mohammed Al Fayed, whose son Dodi died in the crash, said the man claimed his white Citroen Ax was the car detectives have vainly been looking for months.

Investigators have concluded that Diana's Mercedes S-280 brushed against a white Fiat Uno car just before the Aug. 31, 1997, crash, sending

the limousine skidding into a pillar in the tunnel under Alma Square beside the river Seine.

Al Fayed has offered 10 million francs (\$1.7 million) for any new information on the crash or the mysterious car.

The wealthy Egyptian businessman has accused the British secret services of plotting to prevent his Muslim son from marrying the mother of Britain's future king, Prince William.

Al Fayed's lawyer Alain Darteville said the man, whom he declined to name, appeared to be more serious than others who claimed the reward and

turned out to be jokers or swindlers.

"We are checking," he said.

He said the man claimed to have been a passenger in his own car. He said he vanished after the accident and did not testify because his car was uninsured and he was afraid of being fined.

"We have to be very cautious. It's not the first time that someone claims to have information," a spokesman for lawyer Georges Klejman said.

Citroen Axs are roughly the size of a Fiat Uno. But investigators have said that pieces of rear light covers found at the

scene were definitely from a Fiat Uno.

The reward was offered in a quarter-page ad in the tabloid France-Soir earlier this month.

Investigating magistrate Herve Stephan ended his 17-month-long probe into the crash last month, giving all parties involved until this week to request further lines of investigation.

He has placed nine photographs and a photo agency motorcyclist under examination for manslaughter on suspicion that they contributed to the crash by chasing Diana's car and then failed to give

assistance to the victims.

The 10 have denied any responsibility for the crash.

Investigators say they have uncovered no evidence to support the theory that Diana was the victim of a conspiracy.

They say driver Henri Paul, who also died in the crash, appears primarily to blame as he was driving at two to three times the legal speed limit and had a criminal level of alcohol in his blood when he lost control of the car.

The state prosecutor's office, in a possible hint at the probe's eventual conclusion, referred to the crash as an "accident".

Estrada asks rebels to free general

MANILA (R) — Philippine President Joseph Estrada appealed Saturday to Communist rebels to free an army general and his aide kidnapped on the southern island of Mindanao but the rebels said they wanted military operations suspended first.

Estrada insisted that there would be no negotiations with the Communist rebels for the release of Brigadier-General Victor Obillo and the junior officer with him.

"We will pursue the military operation. I am appealing to them to release (the officers) so that no one will get hurt," he said in his regular weekly television and radio broadcast.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Save the Children Federation — U.S. (SCF) is an International NGO working in 39 countries around the world. SC has been working in Jordan for the past 15 years, creating such renowned projects as the Bani Hamida Women's Weaving Programme, Jordan River Designs and the Group Guaranteed Lending and Savings Programme.

Recently, Save the Children has developed an exciting new programme — **Economic Opportunities for Jordanian Youth EOJY**. The goal of the programme is to build the knowledge, skills and attitudes of youth so that they can succeed in the workforce as either employees or entrepreneurs. At the same time, the programme will focus on building a facilitative environment for youth to both acquire these skills and to utilise them. In implementing the EOJY Programme, SC will partner with private sector leaders, the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Youth and UNRWA.

Anticipating significant donor funding for this programme, SC is accepting CVs for the following positions:

Senior Management

- **Training Coordinator:** (>60% field time) Responsible for overseeing and conducting volunteer and staff training. Also will be responsible for overseeing expansion into schools and will supervise district teams. This position will work closely with the Evaluation and Reporting Officer. Significant supervision skill needed and practical training experience — using participatory training methods — is a must.
- **External Liaison Coordinator:** (>60% field time) Responsible for public relations, fund-raising, coordination of special events and banquets as well as media campaigns. This position requires excellent communication skills with 3-5 years experience in fund-raising or marketing. Significant NGO or private sector experience desired.
- **Evaluation/Reporting Coordinator:** (>20% field time) Responsible for developing and implementing, monitoring and evaluating systems at all levels.. student/volunteer/curriculum/programme. Also responsible for all reporting and programme documentation. This position requires significant experience in designing and implementing evaluation systems as well computerised MIS. This position also requires excellent English writing skills.
- **Methodology Coordinator:** (>20% field time) Responsible for developing, testing and documenting programme materials and curriculum. This position requires extensive education experience with good knowledge of participatory methodologies. Excellent Arabic/English writing and translating skills required.
- **Institutional Development Coordinator:** (>50% field time) Responsible for liaising with government partners to plan, implement, organise and design workshops, training and seminars. Also responsible for identifying, and fostering linkages between the EOJY programme and other youth programmes in Jordan. This position requires some training background and significant experience in developing relations with government and non-government partners.

Support Staff

- **Administrative Assistant:** Responsible for providing logistical support for the Amman-based staff and for creating and maintaining the filing systems for the programme. Also will assist in maintaining and developing administration and procurement procedures. A minimum 3 years experience as an administration assistant or executive secretary required.
- **Accountant:** Responsible for the daily financial work of EOJY programme as well as assisting in the development of cost recovery mechanisms. Good knowledge of accounting principles and Excel is needed for this position.
- **Computer Specialist:** Responsible for all programme hardware and software support. Also responsible for developing different data bases for programme use. This position will also install the LAN system and coordinate the Internet Web page development and updating. 3-5 years working experience in computer hardware and software support and development.

All positions noted above are Amman-based. In addition to the criteria above, all staff must be dynamic, responsible, self-starters and should possess good English writing/speaking skills as well as good computer skills.

Interested applicants should send their CVs by mail to the Personnel Director, P.O. Box 9363, Jabel Weibdeh Amman 11191 or fax to 4612 902. Detailed job descriptions will be available at the Save the Children office on Jabel Weibdeh after February 24. No personal appointments will be made or accepted at this time. Applicants should indicate on their cover letter no more than 2 positions for which they are interested and should indicate if they are not interested in being considered for other positions.

Muslim children learn the Serb way

By Louis-Marie Tattévin
Agence France Presse

AT THEIR new school in a suburb of Brcko, the children of local Muslim refugees must learn to recognise the flags of Serbia and Montenegro and speak good Serbian, but they will learn nothing about the 1992-1995 war which ravaged Bosnia.

Amid the snow-blanketed ruins of Brcko's southern suburbs, the 160 pupils of the Brod Number-3 elementary school are obliged to follow a school course specifically meant for ethnic Serbs and which is heavily tainted with official propaganda.

Their future and that of the school hinges on a decision being debated in the Austrian capital, Vienna, by an international commission tasked with deciding which of the two rival post-war Bosnian entities, the Republika Srpska or the Croat-Muslim Federation, should exercise control over the north-east Bosnian town.

Their teacher, Hasija Djejinovic,

54, said the parents of all the children were among some 5,000 Muslim refugees who had returned to the homes from which they were driven when the Serbs seized the town in 1992.

But the school which opened in October lies a few hundred metres on the other side of the boundary which divides the Serb entity from the Federation.

Djejinovic showed journalists a four-page document written in Cyrillic letters, containing the school syllabus sent to her by the Republika Srpska education authority.

The programme contains no reference to the war in Bosnia, nor to the new Bosnia-Herzegovina born of the Dayton accords. Using school books published in Serbia, the children have to learn to draw the flags and learn the anthems of what remains of the old Yugoslavia: Serbia, Montenegro and the RS.

Three hours a week, a teacher comes out from the city centre to

provide lessons in the Serbian language.

"We had many more children at the outset but parents quickly removed half of them because of the Serb teaching programme," Djejinovic said.

As a Muslim refugee herself, Djejinovic takes some liberties with the syllabus, with the blessing of the international community.

"Mr. Farrand (the U.S. supervisor in Brcko, Robert Farrand) told me not to use what I didn't like," she said.

However she is not at liberty to use the Federation school programme received from Sarajevo, in which the Bosnian war is recounted under the heading "the aggression against Bosnia-Herzegovina."

Pending a hypothetical compromise on school programmes, many Muslims who have returned to live in the suburbs of the disputed town say they want to see Brcko's pre-war ethnic balance restored.

[The syllabus] contains no reference to the war in Bosnia, nor to the new Bosnia-Herzegovina... the children have to learn to draw the flags and learn the anthems of what remains of the old Yugoslavia'

"It is the politicians who preach hatred. Most ordinary people just want to get back their jobs, their homes and their friends," said Fadil Konjo, who with his wife Anica is rebuilding their home at Stari Rasadnik.

The Konjos were among the first to venture back 18 months ago and to try to rebuild their lives in the ruins of their old neighbourhood.

"The situation is improving gradually. Between 300 and 400 Muslim families have come back in recent months. There is now a well, a few shops and a doctor who comes once a week," Fadil said.

But for these refugees who in six years have learned to make do with little, the worst is not the daily hardship but the uncertainty hanging over their future.

"We are afraid the arbitration will be postponed once again," said Fadil. "I cannot spend another year without working, living on charity from foreigners. If the fate of Brcko is not

settled, it effectively means it will remain Serb and for us there will be no future. We will leave, not to go to Bosnia, where we will only become refugees again, but somewhere else, another country, and we will never come back," he said.

A ruling on the dispute between Bosnian Serbs and the Muslim-Croat Federation has already been twice delayed, in 1997 and 1998, amid fears that it could threaten the fragile peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The town, currently under Serb control with international supervision, occupies a strategic position for the Serbs in a five-kilometre wide corridor between the eastern and western parts of the Republika Srpska.

The new hearings in Vienna, following a session here last March, began Monday and are expected to last around 10 days. In theory a ruling could be given next month, although some fear the decision could be postponed again.

Book review: Democracy and the global Theme Park

Jihad vs. McWorld: How Globalism and Tribalism are reshaping the world
Benjamin R. Barber
New York, Ballantine Books, 1996, 389 pages, \$12.95

CONTRARY TO what its title might imply, this book is not about a real or imagined Islamic war on the rest of the world. Rather, the author is worried about the fate of democracy in the postmodern age. Barber, a professor at Rutgers University (New Jersey), juxtaposes the two most pervasive dynamics in today's world, both of which he sees as threatening democracy: International consumer capitalism and parochial fragmentation. In this equation, "Jihad" is but a symbol for the latter: "A generic form of fundamentalist opposition to modernity that can be found in most world religions," characterised by exclusiveness and hostility to others (p. 205).

Most of what Barber writes about "Jihad" is situated outside of Muslim countries, from provincial autonomy movements like the Basques and Catalans in France and Spain, to the civil wars in the former socialist bloc. "In this tumultuous world, the real players are not nations at all but tribes, many of them at war with one another. Their aim is precisely to redraw boundaries in order to divide..." Yet these forces are neither the strongest nor the most dangerous on the world scene, for while "Jihad" pursues a bloody politics of identity, McWorld (pursues) a bloodless economics of profit. "What ends in 'Jihad' often begins as an innocent search for self-determination, local identity or multicultural diversity — a defence against 'the numbing and neutering uniformities of industrial modernisation and the colonising culture of McWorld'" (pp. 8-9).

"McWorld," on the other hand, is shorthand for the global capitalist market "that mesmerises peoples everywhere with fast music, fast computers, and fast food — MTV, Macintosh, and McDonald's — pressing nations into one homogenous global theme park, one McWorld tied together by communications, information, entertainment, and commerce" (p. 61). While companies once needed the supportive intervention of governments, they are now truly autonomous and transnational. Existing as "a shifting set of temporary relationships connected by the computer network, phone and fax," such corporations cannot be fixed to any one location, or regulated by any government or democratic institution (p. 26).

Barber contends that despite their appearance as mortal enemies, Jihad and McWorld are actually mutually reinforcing.

ing: "Both make war on the sovereign nation-state and thus undermine (its) democratic citizenship, neither seeks alternative democratic institutions. Each eschews civil society and belittles democratic institutions... In the tumult of the confrontation between global commerce and parochial ethnicity, the virtues of the democratic nation are lost..." (p. 6-7).

The only flaw in this argument is that had nation-states truly fostered democracy on both the domestic and international scene, perhaps neither Jihad nor McWorld would have evolved as they have. Barber appears at times to possess unwarranted faith in the nation-state. On the other hand, no other successful model for organising human society has emerged in modern times. Reservations aside, Barber has written a thought-provoking book full of empirical data showing how our lives are increasingly being moulded by macro-economic forces over which we have no control, and of which we may even be unaware.

In McWorld, advertising is the fastest growing field; the trademark is more important than the product itself; the issue is not meeting consumer needs but creating new needs. Using examples ranging from cars to Coca Cola and Nike, Barber shows that what is being sold is not only products but a way of life, a particularly American one. Not only do transnational monopolies further aggravate the unjust distribution of resources on a world-scale; they actually narrow citizens' choices about their lifestyle, all the while appearing to offer more choice in the form of flashy new consumer goods.

The example of the automobile is instructive. The U.S.'s post-World War II decision to focus on car manufacturing promoted a set of complementary industries (steel, oil, rubber, etc.) at the expense of others. It also shaped public spending and construction patterns at the expense of alternative social options. Americans' "freedom to choose among scores of automobile brands was secured by sacrificing the liberty to choose between private and public transportation, and mandated a world in which strip malls, suburbs, high gas consumption, and traffic jams (to name just a few) became inevitable" (p. 220). This "American way of life" has since been marketed interna-

"An important new book..." — *Washington Post*
JIHAD
McWORLD

BENJAMIN R. BARBER

tionally, as residents of Anuman can easily see.

The dangers lurking in the global theme park are many. Contrary to claims by many economists and politicians, the global market is not democratic; it is ruled by profit, not public interest. Barber gives many examples of market economies prospering in tyrannical states. He also notes that "the hurried pursuit of free markets regardless of social consequences has put democratic development in jeopardy in many nations recently liberated from communism" (p. 15). The market, moreover, is only nominally free: "With a few global conglomerates controlling what is created, who distributes it, where it is shown, and how it is subsequently licensed for further use, the very idea of a genuinely competitive market in ideas or images disappears..." and is replaced by uniformity (p. 89). The international media culture also impinges on democracy at another level, as television, video and computer games combine to bombard the viewer with images and action where style is more important than content. Such media are "fast, fast, faster, and thus by definition hostile to the ponderous pace of careful deliberation upon which all public conversation and decision making on behalf of the common good is premised." In contrast, Barber reminds us: "Democracy, like a good book, takes time" (p. 118).

Sally Bland

A Joyce scholar in Baghdad

By Richard Downes

MOHAMMAD Daweesh should be lecturing young Iraqis on the wonders of English literature. Instead he acts as resident intellectual and translator at the BBC office in Baghdad.

Mohammad has come to realise that working for the foreign media involves hours that few academics would accept. "There's always something to do. My colleagues never seem to sleep," he says with a mischievous grin.

"I live out of town in the small suburb of Dora with my wife, Samira, and our three children. We have a modest house and my wife teaches English in the mornings. At home we are happy but when you look around and see what has happened to this country, you have terrible despair," he said.

The deplorable state of the country's infrastructure, the intermittent electricity, and a new phenomenon, child beggars on the streets, compounds the gloom. "Never in Iraq before have we seen such a thing. Every day there are more in the streets, people with no work and no livelihood. It is a terrible thing. You know, we Iraqis are very proud and this really hurts me," he said.

Wednesday was the most important day for many years for Mohammad. It was not the air duelling between allied and Iraqi warplanes in the south of the country that preoccupied him, nor the meeting of the country's Revolutionary Command Council, but an important interview. It was his viva voce, the oral examination that would decide whether he would be awarded the title Doctor of Philosophy for his unusual thesis. The subject is a semiotic translation of James Joyce's novel *Ulysses*. "I am not really nervous," he claimed before heading off to the examination centre, "but this is six years' work and I hope there will be no problem."

To get to the university would usually involve a long and potentially hazardous trip in one of the ramshackle taxis that belch out vile fumes in polluted Baghdad. Nothing can be left to chance when it came to this interview, so Mohammad hired a taxi for the whole day and headed off to the university for the three-hour grilling by five professors. The remarkable thing about the academic scene in Baghdad is that it still exists, even if it is only a shadow of its former self.

At the party afterwards to celebrate his successful interview, the new Dr. Mohammad Daweesh confided that he had been nervous. "You may think that all the best Iraqis are outside the country. I suppose that is true but they did not make it easy for me. Those professors that stayed behind are no fools, you know. They made it tough for me," he said.

After the excitement of the interview it

is back to the humdrum existence of translating news conferences and dealing with the sometimes silly queries and questions of foreign correspondents. But every day, subject to the demands of his employer, Mohammad makes a point of visiting the library of Baghdad University to check on some fact for his research, or just for a quiet place to read. It is a habit that comes from a deep love of literature. "I have to read, and when I read I want to translate it into Arabic so that others can share the richness of English language literature with me," he said.

A short, almost throwaway phrase in *Ulysses* drew Mohammad into the rich and complex world of 20th-century literature. The passage concerns a cat asleep next to some children playing marbles, as the novel's hero, Leopold Bloom, journeys through Dublin. Deciding to avoid the cat, Bloom remarks to himself: "Better not to bother them. Mohammad cut his sleeve in order not to bother one." The intriguing reference to the Muslim Prophet in a novel whose central character is a Dublin Jew perplexed Mohammad, who was studying linguistics at Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh.

Months of independent research failed to throw light on the reference, but a chance encounter with a Sufi mystic revealed its source: The legends that have built up among Sufi scholars. One legend surrounding the Prophet told of his waking from an afternoon siesta to find a cat asleep on his long sleeve. "He did not want to wake the cat, so he got a scissor and he cut his sleeves, left them there under the cat and went away," said Mohammad.

The episode speaks of the gentleness of the Prophet and is treasured in certain Muslim traditions.

"I wonder how James Joyce got this story. It is amazing. One would have to have a deep knowledge of the life of the Prophet to know this sort of detail. I spoke to many religious people here in Baghdad. They couldn't tell me anything about it."

Perhaps he found it when he was in Trieste, from the Bosnian Muslims," he said.

From the age of 17 the work of Joyce and another Irish writer, Samuel Beckett, has fascinated him. "I started to read Beckett first but quickly realised that Joyce was in many ways the power behind Beckett. So I started reading Joyce. First *Dubliners*, then *A Portrait of the Artist* until I eventually came to *Ulysses*. What a novel, what an extraordinary project. I remember the first days reading it. It was very difficult, very complex, but absorbing."

His thesis on translating the novel into Arabic will now be followed by an attempt to translate the entire work.

Mohammad's greatest ambition is to walk the route of Bloom's travel through



Mohammad Daweesh's greatest ambition is to walk the route of Bloom's travel through Dublin on Bloomsday, 16 June (file photo)

Dublin on Bloomsday, 16 June. That looks increasingly unlikely as sanctions have isolated even literary scholars such as Mohammad from the international mainstream. Last year he wrote to the British Library lending department in York, requesting copies of the Joyce Quarterly journal. As an overseas member with credit coupons bought when he was resident in Britain, he was not prepared for the caustic reply. "They refused, saying they couldn't process my application because of sanctions imposed by the British government, and they warned me. They said don't send any further requests until sanctions are lifted. It is depressing, upsetting. James Joyce has nothing to do with chemical weapons or biological secrets," he said, the look of bewilderment mixed with genuine hurt visible in his large brown eyes.

"The Western commitment to honouring sanctions has gone too far. It does not differentiate between individual needs and military needs," he said, before packing up his office materials and heading home for the day.

Tucked into his satchel is his latest project: The translation of a long obituary of the poet Ted Hughes. "I have always liked this poet. He is full of strange and powerful insights into nature and the violence that lives just below the surface of our lives," he said, before braving the chilly streets of Baghdad for a taxi to take him home. The article comes from a British newspaper sent by a colleague in London, in defiance of the intellectual embargo. "We've got to keep our minds alive, somehow. I'm sure the author and The Independent newspaper will forgive me."

The charming smile speaks volumes for the resilience and resourcefulness of the intellectuals and scholars that have stayed behind and survived in Iraq against enormous odds.

— The Independent

Mel Gibson wants to talk except ... except ... except ...

By Douglas J. Rowe
Associated Press

MEL GIBSON wants to talk about his new movie ... except for the new ending he gave it ... except for making the bad guy he plays smarter ... except for reports of a falling-out with director Brian Helgeland.

He's glad to talk about the success of his production company ... except he doesn't really like the idea that he's a movie mogul.

Maybe it's the residual effects of being a Mean, Mad Mel in his latest hit, "Payback." Or maybe it's just that he's trying to quit smoking ... again.

In the end, though, he has nothing but praise for Helgeland, who co-wrote "L.A. Confidential." Gibson loves the absurdist feel of the film, which includes Lucy Liu (the frosty Ling from TV's "Ally McBeal") as Pearl, an enthusiastic dominatrix. The movie is a remake of John Boorman's 1967 "Point Blank" starring Lee Marvin.

He also appreciates how Helgeland gave "Payback" a retro feel, evocative of the late 1960s, early '70s, reminding Gibson of gritty crime-caper, tough-guy movies like "Charley Varrick" and "Dirty Harry." But actor and director had some, uh, artistic differences, as they say in Hollywood.

Gibson, who plays a character simply named Porter, wanted to add a few points to Porter's SAT score, and he wanted a "clearer" ending because he deemed the original too ambiguous: Porter is shot full of holes and drives off.

"It was flat. I don't like putting out flat movies," Gibson said, flatly.

For his part, Helgeland is already working on another movie and wouldn't give an interview.

Gibson also didn't want to talk about the postproduction changes because he thinks that fuels erroneous reports about rancor between him and Helgeland. "I hate getting into this ... It's like juicy gossip. ... It was all done amicably," he said.

Gibson knocked down a tabloid report

that the director was fired. "Well, he wasn't fired. His name's still on it. He saw the end product," he said. "And left his name on it."

"He opted not to do the rewrites and the reshoots, although he was asked to. But he wouldn't, because he felt he was compromising his artistic integrity. That's OK. Fine. ..."

"His cut was good. And his film is there, essentially."

There's not that much change. It was really peripheral, what we did.

Finally, Gibson harrumphs: "If you want the final cut, get it in your contract like I do. It took me 20 years to earn it, too, by the way." Spoken like a mogul.

"Is this what being a mogul feels like? This is really strange. It feels like hard work to me," says Gibson.

This from the man who directed, produced, starred in and marshalled medieval armies for "Braveheart" and cleaned up both at the box office and the Oscars.

Along with his longtime friend,



Mel Gibson doesn't want to be a movie mogul (file photo)

accountant Bruce Davey, Gibson set up Icon Productions in 1988, and their movies include the box-office hit "Maverick," "Immortal Beloved," "Brave-

heart," "187" and "Fairy Tale — A True Story." Long ago, however, Gibson didn't give much thought to acting, let alone making films and having "final cut." After graduating from high school in Australia, where his family had moved from upstate New York when he was 12, Gibson thought about becoming a chef or a journalist.

Then his sister submitted an application for him, without his knowledge, to the National Institute of Dramatic Art at the University of New South Wales. Once he learned of it, he decided to go through with the required audition.

His early films included "Tim" and "Gallipoli." Selected People magazine's Sexiest Man Alive in 1985, he has also starred in the lucrative "Lethal Weapon" and "Mad Max" series. "Ransom" and "Conspiracy Theory" The sixth of 11 children himself ("my father always wanted to own a shoe factory," he jokes), Gibson and wife Robyn have six kids, and a seventh is due in April.

Gibson's commercial successes allow

him to tackle artier projects, like his 1993 directing debut, "The Man Without a Face," about a disfigured recluse.

His next film project (as producer and star again) is Wim Wenders' low-budget "The Million-Dollar Hotel." And he has been planning for several years to make another version of Ray Bradbury's science-fiction classic "Fahrenheit 451" but he said that's been pushed back yet again. "Payback," which had the best opening weekend so far this year, with \$21.4 million in ticket sales, portrays Gibson in typical flawed-hero mode as Porter, the cheated hoodlum out for vengeance.

"Apart from killing people and stealing, he's not a bad guy," the 43-year-old actor said with a glint in his blue eyes.

Porter, admittedly, has a few legitimate gripes: His partner in crime and his wife double-cross him, rob him of \$70,000, shoot him in the back and leave him for dead.

"I think everybody knows what it feels like to want to get even. You're starting from a very good place there."

Daily Business Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

'Easing poverty, unemployment and supporting productive sectors should benefit from aid'

**** COMMENTING ON** the pledges of aid from Arab and foreign countries and institutions, a senior planning official said it is very important and will ease a number of problems especially that the aid will be received before the year 2000.

Yusuf Mansur, head of the technical and assistance coordination units at the Ministry of Planning, stressed that the government's drive will focus on productive sectors and the infrastructure as it aims to fight poverty and unemployment and to create new job opportunities and competitiveness between products.

"Under all circumstances, the government's measures will be directed to serve and develop the civil society," Mansur said adding that their plans to use the (financial) aid. "There are existing projects that need support, and aid will be directed to them. Furthermore, some sectors suffering from problems will be among the priorities on which aid will be distributed," he pointed out.

Fakhri Bilbeisi, a board member of the Jordanian Businessmen Association, stressed the importance of using the aid to support productive projects and the infrastructure for new projects with the aim of encouraging local and foreign investments in Jordan. He called also for utilising the aid to support the Social Productivity Package in order to minimise the effects of poverty and unemployment in the society and to contribute in providing training and

rehabilitation.

Bilbeisi said support and aid can be offered through other forms than financial backing, through opening the opportunities and making jobs available to Jordanians in neighbouring countries. He called for discussing the best means to use the aid and employ it to serve the various sectors of the society through the participation of the private sector in this process. "Such an involvement would entice the private sector to invest and repatriate funds from abroad," Bilbeisi indicated noting that attracting foreign investment depends on the size of local investments.

Akram Karmoul, an industrial expert, emphasised the need to distribute the aid, especially that coming from Arab Gulf countries, on joint projects/investments as they contribute to hiring labour, supporting the dinar and the treasury and maintaining economic stability in the Kingdom.

"It is not only important to receive the aid in as much as employing various resources and local entities to utilise it in a proper manner such as lowering taxes, especially the sales tax, and facilitating administrative procedures at different departments with the aim of encouraging joint investments," Karmoul said.

He demanded that productive sectors be supported and strengthened to enable Jordan face the possible effects from trade globalisation (Al Dustour).

G-7 sees world economy deteriorating

BONN (R) — Finance ministers of the Group of Seven (G-7) industrial nations admitted Saturday that the outlook for the world economy had deteriorated and pledged to redouble efforts to keep growth on track.

At a day-long meeting near Bonn, the ministers voiced serious concern about Russia's economic plight and agreed to keep a closer check on flows of foot-loose capital to try to nip future financial crises in the bud.

Exchange rates, including a sharp fall recently in the value of the yen, were discussed only briefly, although ministers did reaffirm their determination to avoid excessive swings and significant misalignments in currency markets.

The ministers from the United States, Japan, Britain, France, Germany, Canada and Italy said there had been encouraging trends since their last meeting on Oct. 30.

Asia was stabilising after the trauma of recession and financial turmoil, rich-country stock markets had calmed down, the European Union had successfully launched its single currency and interest rate cuts had been cut in the United States, Europe and Japan.

"But financial market conditions have worsened in some regions and the outlook for global economic growth is somewhat less favourable. The impact of financial crises is now

felt beyond the regions where the crises occurred," the ministers said in a communique.

"Against this background, it is of the utmost importance to strengthen in all countries the foundations for sustainable growth of output and employment," they added.

U.S. officials said the communique's stress on the need for domestic demand-led growth was a victory for Washington's insistence that Japan and Europe must buy more from developing countries desperate to export their way back to economic health.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin said that the outlook for the U.S. economy was favourable, but that Japan and especially Europe needed to boost growth.

"It is very important for the world that Europe get back on track," said Rubin, worried that a big jump in the U.S. trade deficit last year to a record \$169 billion could fan protectionism and create financial problems for America.

"On the question of how, we had a lot of discussion," he told a news conference.

Japan, by contrast, got off lightly. Finance Minister Kiichi Miyazawa said the rest of the G-7 had made no specific demands.

"The bottom line is they did not say 'do this, do that.' The consensus was that Japan has

done what it can and that we could now only await results," Miyazawa said.

The Tokyo government has gone on a spending spree and the central bank has reduced interest rates close to zero in a hitherto vain attempt to drag the world's second-largest economy out of its deepest recession in half a century.

The G-7 reserved the most direct language of its communique for Russia, whose de facto default on its foreign debt last summer sent world markets into a dangerous tailspin that

ended only with deep interest rate cuts by the U.S. central bank.

The ministers, who were joined for part of the day by Finance Minister Mikhail Zadornov, said they remained concerned by the economic situation in Russia and its mounting debt arrears.

The seven ministers, who were accompanied by their central bank governors, also instructed global financial regulators to cooperate more closely to head off the sort of market turmoil that is hobbling world

economic growth.

They endorsed a report by German Bundesbank President Hans Tietmeyer recommending the creation of a new "financial stability forum" to try to prevent a repeat of the crises that have shaken Asia, Russia and Brazil in the past two years.

The forum, made up of officials from existing international bodies, will meet at least twice a year to sound the alarm if it spots worrying trends in global capital flows.

COMMERCIAL VACANCIES IN THE BRITISH EMBASSY

The Commercial Section of the British Embassy requires staff to help promote British business interests in Jordan.

COMMERCIAL OFFICER (1 POST)

This job will involve:-

- identifying commercial opportunities for British companies with particular responsibility for allocated industrial/commercial sectors
- delivery of a range of support services for UK exporting companies
- making initiative visits to Jordanian companies
- supplying market information and sector reports regularly to companies and organisations in the UK
- organising and participating in commercial events
- briefing business visitors

This is a senior representational position and the successful candidate will be confident, educated to University degree standard, fluent in Arabic & English (oral and written) and computer literate. He/she will have a good knowledge of business in Jordan, an ability to cultivate business contacts at senior level and a sound appreciation of international trade matters. There is a requirement for regular work outside of normal office hours, travel within Jordan and more occasionally to other countries in the Middle-East and to the UK. Car ownership is desirable (an allowance is payable).

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Post 1. Direct support for a Commercial Officer including research into specific industrial/commercial sectors, answering enquiries from British and Jordanian companies, drafting preparation and despatch of tailored market reports for companies in the UK.

Post 2. Front-line enquiry officer able to deal with the public and to answer written and telephone enquiries, provide clerical support to the whole Section and manage the Section's file store (registry and company database).

A good level of IT and Internet user skills is required for both of these positions and a very good standard of written and spoken English is essential.

Applications specifying which post you are applying for with a CV should be addressed to

The Commercial Secretary
The British Embassy
P.O. Box 6062 Amman

Closing date 7 March 1999

Candidates chosen for interview will be provided with a more detailed job description and conditions of service.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Venus is going into your sign today, and that ought to be lots of fun. Venus brings good luck as well as love. Jupiter, also for good luck, is in your sign now, too. That's about as good as it gets. To prove you're intelligent as well as lucky, spend some time planning how you're going to use these conditions, to benefit others, of course.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) The key to success today is communication, and for that you are well-versed. If you can keep the conversation going, all problems can be resolved, and the whole bunch of you will end up much better friends than you were before. Make that your intention, and it's bound to happen.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You're talented as a communicator, and can often find just the right words. Today, however, words are not what's required. It's more likely a gesture that will best express your thoughts. But how should you express your feelings if you can't use words? Well, how about a little gift? Flowers would be perfect.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 22) Remember those people you told to drop by sometime? Well, they might actually do it now, without calling ahead. Even a visit from old friends could disturb an intimate moment that was brewing. So if there's something private you'd like to talk about with someone you love, make a little extra effort to set up the environment.

LEO: (July 23 to August 22) People are in argumentative moods today, yourself included. A compromise is possible, but only if people really listen to one another. If you can't get anybody to do that, you may have to insist on certain rules: Only one person talks at a time, and everybody gets a turn. You'll be amazed at how effective this can be.

VIRGO: (August 23 to September 22) You've been up to your ears all week long, solving problems and handling disputes. In the upcoming weeks, you'll have more support from your partner, and you ought to use it. Mention your work-related problems briefly if you must, and take suggestions, but then let it drop. Today, devote all your time and attention to the ones you love.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) The sun is in Pisces and the moon is in Taurus. If you go over your budget today, make sure you scout some of that money away for yourself. What does your savings account look like now, anyway? It's a good day to put more in there. Conditions are excellent for building towards a strong future.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) People won't hesitate today to tell you how to live your life better, and how you should go about it. Even more irritating, some of their comments will be accurate. So don't trust your own enthusiasm fully. You're also going to have to use common sense, and some of that might come from somebody else.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Venus, symbolising love, is going into Aries today, in your solar fifth house of romance and games. So this is the perfect day to play with those you love best. The fifth house also represents children, because romance has a childlike quality. Its new and fresh and naive and trusts everything. Today, you can be that way. Follow your heart.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 19) A misunderstanding about money could lead to a new agreement on how you and a roommate do business. Talk freely about a difficult subject, so you truly understand each other's positions. Remember to do it with a smile, especially if your comments are critical. This conversation could make your relationship much stronger.

AQUARIUS: (January 20 to February 18) There's so much to learn, you can't possibly cram it all into your brain in one day. It'll take several weeks, at least. Actually, in several weeks, you'll have barely begun, but you'll have mastered a few things along the way. And you'll certainly be further ahead than you are now, so you'd better get started.

PISCES: (February 19 to March 20) Venus, for good luck, is going into Aries, in your solar second house of money and valuables. Jupiter brings even better luck, and it's in there too! This means wonderful treasures are to be found. However, Saturn, for restrictions and rules, is also in Aries, and there you have it. If you play by the rules, you could win the big prize.

Birthstone of February: Amethyst — Onyx

JORDAN TIMES
TEL:
564311-569634

JOB VACANCY

ACCOMMODATION OFFICER, BRITISH EMBASSY, AMMAN

Applicants should have experience in the management of accommodation, both residential and office premises, particularly in areas such as leasing, maintenance and all aspects of related financial management. Good interpersonal skills and commitment to customer care are needed, together with a high level of both written and spoken English and Arabic, and good computer skills.

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NBA roundup

MEMPHIS, Tennessee
 (AP) — Top seed Todd
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 nearly derailed the veter-
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 Memphis title and fifth trip
 to the finals here, Martin
 won in 1992 and 1995 and
 lost in the final in 1993 and
 1996.

Ben Sulayem wins UAE International Rally

ABU DHABI (J.T.) — Mohammad Ben Sulayem survived a dramatic late scare to complete an emphatic victory in the ADNOC FOD UAE International Rally Friday, underlining his determination to capture an 11th Middle East drivers' title.

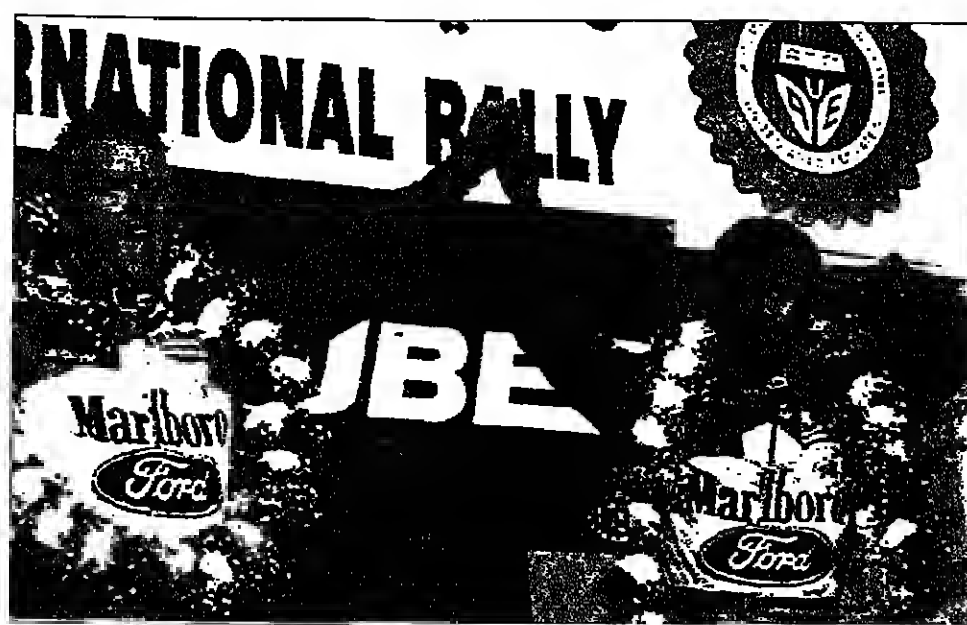
Sulayem was cruising to his fourth consecutive victory in Abu Dhabi, when a spectator accidentally triggered off a fire extinguisher inside his Ford world rally car at the end of the 13th of 17 special stages, damaging the wiring and causing technical problems on the final two stages.

Despite losing almost two minutes as a result, the Arab world's leading driver kept his composure to win by 3 minutes 48 seconds from Rashid Bin Ghurrah, who was driving a former Sulayem Ford Escort Cosworth.

Speaking at the finish after clinching his 47th international rally victory, Sulayem said: "If this problem had happened earlier in the rally, we wouldn't be here now. I'm just relieved to get to the finish and start my season with a victory."

Sharjah's Sheikh Abdullah Al Qassimi made a flying start to the defence of his Middle East Group N title by finishing third overall, comfortably winning the category for production cars for the second time in Abu Dhabi.

Kuwaiti champion Mohammed Al Sarraf showed his potential as Qassimi's biggest threat in the regional Group N title



Ten-time Middle East rally champion Mohammad Ben Sulayem (R) of Dubai celebrates victory with co-driver Ronan Morgan (L) of Ireland, at the Abu Dhabi Rally, Friday. Fellow Emirati Rashed Ben Ghurrah came in second, followed by Abdullah Al Qassimi of Sharjah (AFP photo)

chase by finishing fourth, a further seven minutes 39 seconds back.

Oman's Nizar Al Shanfari took advantage when Nicolas Mandrides dropped four minutes with engine problems on stage nine to pass the UAE-based Cypriot driver and finish fifth in a Mitsubishi Evolution 5.

The battle between the two Jordanian drivers was won by Lee Dunn, who pipped team-mate Faris Bustami to seventh spot in only his third international rally. Both drivers flew black flags from their Toyota Celicas as a tribute to King Hussein who was a big supporter of rallying in Jordan.

Bustami dropped to ninth after getting stuck in sand for eight minutes on stage

12, allowing 1992 Middle East Group N champion Ron Oakeley to finish eighth.

Britain's Howard Paterson completed a hat-trick of wins in the Formula Two class, finishing tenth overall and leading home the category for two-wheel drive cars.

In a cruel blow, Fiona Mulcahy missed out on winning the ladies' title when her battery failed on the penultimate stage.

Held under the Patronage of H.E. Sheikh Saif Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, and organised by the Automobile and Touring Club for the UAE, the ADNOC FOD UAE International Rally was co-sponsored by Mina Zayed, Al-Masood Automobiles,

Taxi Al Ghazal, Abu Dhabi National Hotels Co., Ford, Danka Kodak, GTS Recovery, and the official hotel and rally headquarters, the Abu Dhabi Hilton.

Second day casualties included special stages 14 and 17 which were cancelled owing to deteriorating conditions caused by drivers churning up sand, while the Formula Two hopes of Britain's Amrik Sehmbi's also fell victim to soft sand on stage 11.

Sulayem now takes his FIA Middle East Championship bid to Jordan (May 12-14), Cyprus (June 11-13), Lebanon (July 8-11), Qatar (October 8-10), before returning home to Dubai (December 1-3) for the season's climax.

Lajunen leads after ski jumping of Nordic combined event

RAMSAU, Austria (AP) — Samppa Lajunen of Finland took the lead after the ski jumping portion of the nordic combined event Saturday at the Nordic Ski World Championship.

Lajunen, the Olympic silver medalist last year in Nagano in both the individual and the team events, leaped 98 and 87 meters from the k90 hill to collect 236 points.

That gave him a 15-second advantage over two Russians, Alexei Fadeev and Dmitry Sinitzyn, going into the 15-kilometre cross-country race, the second part of the combined, later Saturday.

Olympic Champion Bjarte Engen Vik of Norway was 30 seconds behind and in good position to win the gold medal.

The two Russians are not fast in the cross-country race. Vik's stronger point, and Lajunen has been weakened by a stomach virus that has hit the Finnish team.

Vik's greatest rival on the world cup circuit, Hannu Manninen, had to withdraw because of the virus.

Fadeev and Sinitzyn both collected 233.5 points. Fadeev had jumps of 92 and 89 meters, Sinitzyn of 93.5 and 90 meters.

Vik jumped 95 and 86 metres and had 231 points.

After Friday's snowstorm, the weather turned milder and rainy Saturday.

In a snowstorm, nobody can defeat Mika Myllylae.

The 29-year old Finn has a history of triumphs in extreme weather conditions, and Friday's victory in 30k freestyle was no exception.

Beating Thomas Alsgaard of Norway in second place by 35.3 seconds and his teammate Bjorn Daehlie by almost quarter of a minute in the



Samppa Lajunen of Finland flies through the air during the Nordic Combined event at the World Nordic Skiing Championships Saturday. Lajunen leads the competition after the jumping section of the combined event with 236 points (Reuters photo)

opening event of the Nordic Ski World Championships.

Myllylae could even afford to grab the Finnish flag in the home stretch and wave to his fans.

"With a 35-second advantage, I knew I could always walk to the finish line if it came to the worst," he said.

Snow has been falling in Ramsau for several days, a factor which was crucial for Myllylae's decision to take to the course.

"It was only yesterday morning that I decided to take part in the race," he admitted, "when you see it's the right weather for you, you just have to ski."

Originally, Myllylae's main focus on the championships was to be the 50k, an event he won at the nordic worlds in Trondheim, Norway, two years ago.

"After all the health problems I had in December and January, I wanted to save energy for my favorite discipline," he said.

On Friday, however, there was no doubt about

his victory.

"I did very well in the second part of the race and on the 28th kilometre, I already knew I would win," he said.

"Today's victory means a lot to me because I was fighting against the time for most of the season and my self-confidence was very low."

Alsgaard also faced health problems throughout the season, qualifying for the worlds only on the strength of his results at the Norwegian Ski Championships.

But he seems to be peaking in Ramsau and his favorite discipline, the 10k classical style race, is yet to come.

"This is where I could win my first individual gold medal here," the Olympic champion from Lillehammer said.

For Daehlie, the 30k seems to be a jinxed event.

He last won it at a world cup in oestersund four years ago, finishing second in Trondheim and 20th in Nagano: "I wasn't in my best form today but still, I'm quite satisfied with the third place."

The Norwegian superstar won his 16th medal at the Nordic Worlds Friday, and remains on course for a podium finish in all five events here.

The 30k freestyle turned out to be a disaster for some of the favourites.

The defending champion Alexei Prokhorov of Russia finished 28th, while the Russian-born Austrian Mikhail Borwinov, predicted for a podium finish by Daehlie, came home in a disappointing 18th.

In the women's 15k freestyle race, Stefania Belmondo of Italy ended a six-year gold medal drought at a major event, comfortably beating Estonia's Kristina Smugun in second and the home crowd favourite Maria Theurl in third.

"I went without a gold medal for six years so this is a great comeback for me," Belmondo said, adding that her skis were perfectly prepared and that she enjoyed the weather conditions.

Henman and Rusedski move one step away from title showdown

ROTTERDAM, Netherlands (AFP) — Top British players Tim Henman and Greg Rusedski moved one step away from a showdown in Sunday's final at the \$550,000 ATP event here Friday when they won their quarter-finals.

The third-seeded Henman saw off sixth-seed Karol Kucera of Slovakia 6-4, 7-6 (7/4) and now faces Marat Safin of Russia.

Safin saw off Wayne Ferreira of South Africa 6-2, 6-7 (5/7), 6-1. "I probably played some of my best tennis this year so far," said Henman, who beat Czech Petr Korda in the previous round.

"I played a great tie-breaker and I was really patient at the baseline."

The big-serving Rusedski slammed down 26 aces and held out in a tense and tight clash with Cedric Pioline of France to score a 7-6 (7/5), 3-6, 7-6 (7/5) win.

"I couldn't have asked for anything better than to do well here in Rotterdam," said Rusedski who now plays the second-seeded Yevgeny Kafelnikov of Russia.

The Australian Open champion found the going anything but easy but eventually saw off Switzerland's promising Roger Federer 6-1, 6-7, 6-4.

"I had a good test and passed it today," said Rusedski, adding: "but tomorrow's match is going to be really hard against Kafelnikov who is looking for the number-one spot on the ATP tour rankings."



Briton Tim Henman hammers a ball to Karol Kucera of the Slovak Republic during their match of the \$550,000 ABN-AMRO tennis tournament in Rotterdam, on Friday. Henman won 6-4 and 7-6 to advance to the semifinals (AFP photo)

Martin outlasts Gambill to reach semifinal

MEMPHIS, Tennessee (AFP) — Top seed Todd Martin outlasted fellow American Jan-Michael Gambill 3-6, 7-5, 7-6 (9/7) to reach the semifinals of the \$700,000 ATP St. Jude Classic.

Seventh seed Gambill nearly derailed the veteran's bid for his third Memphis title and fifth trip to the finals here. Martin won in 1994 and 1995 and lost in the final in 1993 and 1996.

Martin won last month's Sydney International and reached the Australian Open quarterfinal before a pulled stomach muscle contributed to a straight-set loss to Yevgeny Kafelnikov.

Gambill and Martin were teammates in the U.S.' disappointing loss to Italy in last year's Davis Cup, each falling in singles.

Third-seeded Australian Open semifinalist Tommy Haas of Germany also

needed three sets to advance, dispatching Aussie Andrew Ilie 7-5, 3-6, 6-3. Haas rose to 10-2 for the season.

Also bidding for the \$120,000 top prize entering Saturday's semifinals are American Jim Courier, who ousted sixth seed Mariano Puerta of Argentina 6-0, 6-2, and Dutchman John Van Lottum, who beat Canadian Daniel Nestor, 3-6, 7-6 (7/3), 6-4.

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Lahtela, Battelle win World Cup freestyle

MADARAO, Japan (AFP) — Nagano Olympics silver medalist Janni Lahtela of Finland posted his third straight win to take the men's moguls overall title in the world cup skiing freestyle on Saturday.

American Ann Battelle, 10th in the Olympics, clinched her first win of the season in the women's moguls final leg to snatch the seasonal title from world cup points leader Marja Elfman of Sweden.

Lahtela earned the same points from his attempts as runner-up Thony Hemery of France and Stephane Rochon of Canada, but collected the highest points of all in the air for a total of 26.54 points.

Hemery ended with 26.51 points, followed by Rochon with 26.37 points.

Lahtela, the winner at Blackcomb, Canada, three weeks ago and at Inawashiro Wednesday, collected 100 points for a total of 376 points to finish atop in the men's moguls standings.

His compatriot Lauri Lassila, fifth Saturday, was

second with 362 points, followed by American Caleh Martio with 316 points.

Battle, whose highest finish was third in the season opener and fourth three straight times, finally fin-

ished with the highest place on the podium with a score of 24.07 points.

Battelle received the best points from her performance in the air, which appeared decisive to beat

Margarita Marbler of Austria into second and Olympic champion Tae Satoya into third.

It was the final leg of the five-race moguls series.



United Nations Development Programme JOB ANNOUNCEMENT

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Jordan is inviting interested individuals to submit applications for the position of Procurement Assistant within the Procurement Office of the Rehabilitation Programme of the Electricity Network in Northern Iraq. The successful candidates will be based in Amman, Jordan, but will have to travel regularly to Northern Iraq.

Duties:

Under the guidance and supervision of the Chief, Procurement Officer, the Procurement Assistant will:

- Ensure full knowledge and systematic application of the procurement and contracting regulations and procedures of UNDP;
- Establish and maintain an up-to-date roster of potential suppliers of goods and services in the electricity generation, transmission and distribution fields;
- Support the engineering staff of the programme on all matters related to procurement and contracting;
- Prepare bidding documents, purchase orders, and contracts for goods and services to be procured under the programme in accordance with UNDP guidelines;
- Carry out all other relevant procurement and contracting tasks.

Qualifications:

- A graduate degree in Electrical Engineering and/or Business Administration;
- Minimum five years of experience in the procurement field;
- Familiarity with public procurement procedures;
- Good organizational and procurement skills;
- Complete fluency in English and Arabic.

All applications should be received in the UNDP Office in Amman (P.O. Box 941631, Amman 11194, Jordan) no later than 11th of March 1999, in an envelope marked "Electricity Network Rehabilitation Programme - Northern Iraq". Short-listed candidates will be expected to sit for a written test and appear before an interview panel.

Turkey announces amnesty for rebels as Kurd protests go on

Agencies

TURKISH PRIME Minister Bulent Ecevit urged Kurdish rebels on Saturday to surrender under a planned partial amnesty, but protests triggered by the arrest of rebel chief Abdullah Ocalan continued across Turkey and Europe.

Turkey's old rival Greece tried to generate diplomatic pressure to ensure that Ocalan received a fair trial but Ankara said it wanted to know why Greece had harboured Ocalan for 12 days in its embassy in Kenya before he was snatched by Turkey.

Ankara also began to scale down a military onslaught on the rebels in Iraqi territory, but Ecevit's call for an end to 14 years of bloody rebellion contained no concessions to Kurdish nationalists seeking a negotiated solution.

Nevertheless, it was Ankara's first official gesture to the rebels since Ocalan was captured last Monday.

"I am calling on the young people in the mountains to now put down their weapons and hand themselves in," Ecevit told a news conference. "Lend us your hands and contribute to the development of our people."

Ecevit, who is certain to have received a boost from Ocalan's detention ahead of an election in April, said he had cross-party support for a law to be passed after the election giving repentant rebels reduced sentences.

But he failed to impress tens of thousands of Kurds who demonstrated in at least 10 cities across Western Europe including London, Paris, Stockholm, Geneva and Vienna.

The biggest rally was in Bonn, where riot police prevented some 7,000 Kurds from marching to the Israeli embassy to mourn three militant colleagues killed by security guards as they tried to storm the Israeli consulate in Berlin last Tuesday.

In contrast to Tuesday's protests, which included the occupation of more than 20 Greek and Kenyan diplomatic missions across Europe, Saturday's demonstrations were largely limited to chanting and the burning of Turkish flags.

But in Rome some 50 Kurdish militants broke away from the main rally to throw petrol bombs at a Turkish Airlines office, and clashed with police in riot gear.

In Turkey itself, the state-

run Anatolia news agency said unknown assailants had exploded bombs in Istanbul, thrown petrol bombs at vehicles and smashed shop windows.

In a first sign of support for Ocalan, a group of Palestinians on Saturday called for his freedom during a rally in the West Bank town of Jenin.

The Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), a small PLO faction, said in a statement that the international community must intervene to "preserve the dignity of Ocalan" and assure that he is being treated as a political leader, not a criminal.

Palestinians are also establishing a solidarity committee with Ocalan, said Maher Dasuki, an independent activist.

"We are doing this out of loyalty to one of the most respected symbols of the international liberation movements," said Dasuki.

In Athens, Greek Prime Minister Costas Simitis, under fire for harbouring Ocalan and then losing him to Turkey, phoned his Portuguese and Swedish counterparts to secure their agreement to discuss Ocalan at an EU foreign ministers' meeting on Monday.

Simitis told them he wanted the EU to ensure that Ocalan, being held on an island near Istanbul, would not face the death penalty and that he get a fair trial according to international law, with his own choice of lawyers and the presence of international observers.

But Turkey's foreign ministry urged the European Union (EU) to press Greece to explain why it had helped Ocalan, whom Turkey labels a "terrorist monster" for leading a violent rebellion in which some 29,000 people have died.

"The European Union is under a responsibility to dissuade a member country that openly supported terrorism from this course of action and to hold it accountable," it said.

Turkey seized on its capture of Ocalan last week to launch a military assault on mountain bases of his Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) across the border in Iraq.

On Saturday it said some 4,000 Turkish troops had been pulled back from the mountainous region, while others were still searching for rebels. A military official said around 10 rebels had been killed in the operation.



A demonstrator Saturday launches a stone at Italian riot police and paramilitary carabinieri agents guarding the Turkish Airlines office in Rome. Demonstrators covering their faces with full-face riding helmets, facemasks and brandishing sticks protested against the arrest of Ocalan. Reports said the demonstrators launched incendiary devices at the Turkish Airlines office (AP photo)

NEWS IN BRIEF

'Date for Palestinian state open'

CAIRO (AFP) — Egypt said Saturday that declaring an independent Palestinian state was at the heart of discussions between Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat. "The date of the declaration is still open for discussion," Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa told reporters, adding that "several factors, including the [May] Israeli elections could have an effect" on the decision. "Without a Palestinian state, peace will be incomplete," Musa said, adding that Israeli opposition to Palestinian independence was "unacceptable." Asked about Arafat's proposal for a Palestinian confederation with Jordan, Musa said that the idea of confederation "demands two equal entities — in other words two states."

'Iran refuses visa to Carter's son'

TEHRAN (R) — Iran has denied an entry visa to James Carter, son of former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, who had planned a friendly visit to the Islamic Republic, the Iranian News Agency (IRNA) reported on Saturday. It quoted an unnamed foreign ministry official as saying the visa had been refused because of "James Carter's past record." The official did not elaborate. Iranian press reports have said Carter had planned an unofficial visit to establish friendly relations between the peoples of Iran and the United States.

Six Iraqi children injured by shell

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Six Iraqi children were injured by a shell left over from the Gulf War eight years ago, the official INA news agency said Saturday. The tragedy took place in the town of Diwaniya to the south of Baghdad, the agency said. INA on Wednesday said Iraqi civil defence workers had defused several cluster bombs dropped by U.S. or British warplanes on the south of the country.

Eritrea 'prepared' to honour ceasefire

ASMARA (AFP) — Eritrea is "prepared" to honour a ceasefire with Ethiopia and wants international observers to deploy along the two countries' disputed border, an Eritrean official said Saturday. "We are prepared to observe a ceasefire. We call for a binding agreement on a ceasefire that provides for the placement of observers along the border," said Yemane Ghebremeskel, an aide to Eritrean President Issaias Afewerki. Earlier Saturday, European Union mediators failed to obtain a ceasefire agreement in the border war, the head of the delegation said Saturday. "Unfortunately, the answers that we were given by our interlocutors as to their willingness to agree to an immediate ceasefire were not satisfactory," German Deputy Foreign Minister Ludger Volmer said. Speaking to reporters, Volmer repeated the EU's position advocating acceptance of an Organisation of African Unity (OAU) peace plan.

Greek police seize ancient statue

THESSALONIKI (R) — Greek police on Saturday seized a valuable marble statue, dating from the second or third century BC, from two men trying to sell it illegally. The police, in the northern Greek city of Thessaloniki, said the pair were asking 40 million drachmas (\$140,000) for the statue of a young man holding an eagle to his chest. Undercover agents posing as buyers arrested them. They said the men, a father and son, must have come across the statue, which archaeologists said was of great historical and commercial value, during construction work when they uncovered an ancient grave.

11 die in Algerian house collapse

ALGIERS (AFP) — Eleven people were killed when a truck carrying construction equipment hit a building in Chaaba, south of Algiers, causing the building to collapse, authorities said Saturday. Five people were seriously injured in the accident Friday evening, apparently caused when the truck's brakes failed, the radio quoted authorities as saying.

Iran smashes counterfeit dollar ring

TEHRAN (R) — Iranian authorities have arrested several African nationals on charges of smuggling millions of counterfeit dollars into the country, the official Iranian News Agency IRNA reported Saturday. The suspects, whose identities or countries of origin were not revealed, went on a shopping spree in Iran using several million dollars in fake bills, it said. The agency did not give further details.

Iran says German's death sentence overturned

TEHRAN (R) — Iran's supreme court has overturned the death sentence against German businessman Helmut Hofer for having illicit sex with an Iranian Muslim woman and ordered a retrial, a judiciary official said Saturday.

The court has quashed the earlier court ruling against German businessman Helmut Hofer and sent his case to the Tehran justice department for a retrial, said judiciary spokesman Fotovat Nassiri Savadkui, quoted by the official Iranian news agency IRNA.

"Deciding about Hofer's freedom will be up to the judge in charge of the next trial of the case," Nassiri Savadkui said.

IRNA's newspaper Iran reported earlier that the supreme court had overturned the death sentence because "there was not enough evi-

dence" and ordered a new trial.

In Bonn, a German foreign ministry spokesman said the German government was aware of the decision.

The foreign ministry spokesman said, however, it was too early to assess what this would mean for Hofer because German officials had not yet read the court's verdict and therefore did not know the reasons given for the decision.

The spokesman said the supreme court had ordered a retrial in a court directly below it in Iran's judicial hierarchy. It was not clear when this would take place.

Hofer was sentenced to death last year after being found guilty of having sex with a 27-year-old unmarried medical student. The ruling had been upheld by an appeals court in October.

Under Iran's Islamic laws a non-Muslim man can face

execution if convicted of having sex out of wedlock with a Muslim woman.

The woman was sentenced to 99 lashes, a ruling also on appeal.

Hofer, who was born in 1941, has said he converted to Islam some years ago when he married a Turkish national. The businessman from Hamburg is now divorced.

The case has been a source of tension between Iran and Germany, a major trading partner of the Islamic republic.

Bonn has made it clear that relations with Tehran would worsen considerably if Tehran executes Hofer.

Ties between the two countries have improved after a 1997 row sparked by a German court ruling that Iranian leaders had ordered the 1992 killings of Kurdish dissidents in Berlin. Iran denied the charges.

Saddam says Iraq ready to turn page in Arab relations

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraqi President Saddam Hussein said Saturday he was ready to "start a fresh page" in his relations with other Arab states if they were willing to adopt a joint position on the Iraq issue.

"If we want, we can start a fresh page in Arab relations by adopting a common stand on the aggression and the sanctions against Iraq and on all the Arab issues," he said in a letter to Arab League Secretary General Esmat Meguid, a copy of which has been seen by AFP.

He said one Arab state should condemn aggression against another "regardless of the policies" of the state attacked.

"A clear stance [by Arab states] on the aggression against Iraq is Iraq's right, and a duty for the Arab League," the letter said.

Saddam said his country was ready on that basis to take part in "any meeting" dealing with improving relations between Arab states.

But he asked Abdul Meguid to postpone a meeting of the Arab follow-up committee charged with working for an end to sanctions imposed on Iraq after its 1990 occupation of Kuwait.

He said an Arab reconciliation meeting should be held first.

Abdul Meguid called last Sunday for an urgent meeting of the follow-up committee, established by a meeting of Arab League foreign ministers in Cairo on Jan. 24.

Meanwhile Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Said Sahhaf, who is visiting Syria as part of a regional tour to discuss the Iraqi situation, also expressed concern about the committee.

"There are disagreements within the follow-up committee," he told journalists. "It is better to continue our contacts in order to avoid errors that could damage everyone, and Iraq in particular."

"If there is a will to move the question of Iraq forward, then the opinion of that country needs to be taken into consideration," Sahhaf said, after a meeting with his Syrian counterpart Farouq Shara.

The follow-up committee is chaired by Syria, its members include Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Sahhaf arrived in Syria Friday on the latest leg of a tour that has already taken him to Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen.

Yemeni officials say Sahhaf told them Iraq would stop its verbal attacks on other Arab countries, in particular Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

The January meeting of the Arab League foreign ministers called on Baghdad to stop provoking its neighbours and to take concrete steps to prove its good intentions towards Kuwait and other neighbouring countries.

Disarmament panel meets next week to resume Iraq work

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — A panel of weapons experts from around the world will meet at U.N. headquarters next week to begin the lengthy process of trying to resume disarmament work in Iraq after a near six-month hiatus.

Diplomats said Friday they expect the meeting, which begins Tuesday, to focus on assessing the state of the eight-year U.N. effort to rid Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction. The first session could last through Saturday.

A recommendation by panelists on how to continue the disarmament work is due by April 15.

Regardless of the panel's recommendation to the

Security Council, however, it remains to be seen how any disarmament work can continue.

Iraq has said it won't allow U.N. inspectors in the wake of U.S. and British airstrikes in December. The bombings followed a report that Baghdad had not fully cooperated with the inspectors.

U.N. experts must report to the Security Council that Iraq is disarmed before the oil embargo imposed after Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990 can be lifted.

Iraq says it is disarmed and has demanded the embargo be lifted immediately. U.N. weapons inspectors say Iraq still has to provide more information about its weapons pro-

grammes — particularly in the biological field — before they can give Baghdad a clean bill of health.

Last month, the council agreed to create the disarmament panel — and others on humanitarian problems in Iraq and Kuwait-related issues — as a first step to breaking the diplomatic impasse that followed the airstrikes.

Iraq curtailed cooperation with U.N. weapons inspectors in August and severed it altogether in October.

On Friday, Brazilian Ambassador Celso Amorim, who is chairing all three panels, met with members of the humanitarian panel to discuss how it would carry out its

work, which is slated to begin in the first week or two of March, diplomats said.

The diplomats stressed that next week's meetings on disarmament would be technical — not political — in nature, relying on presentations of what has been learned about Iraq's biological, chemical and nuclear weapons and the long-range missiles used to deliver them.

Debate in the Security Council about the state of Iraq's disarmament have largely degenerated into political disputes.

Iraqi sympathisers Russia, France and China argue that Baghdad has largely complied with disarmament resolutions and should be granted

relief from the embargo. The United States and Britain take a harder line, echoing the inspectors' assessment that Iraq needs to produce more information.

Among the disarmament panelists are several commissioners and staff members of the U.N. Special Commission and the International Atomic Energy Agency, which have carried out weapons inspections and monitoring in Iraq. Outside experts are also included.

Absent will be chief weapons inspector Richard Butler, the controversial UNSCOM chief. His deputy, Charles Duelfer of the United States, is on the panel, however.

Arab League condemns Israel, Turkey

CAIRO (AFP) — The Arab League issued a sharp condemnation of Israel on Saturday over its takeover of a village in south Lebanon, and also assailed Turkey for its incursion into northern Iraq.

"The Arab League vigorously condemns Israel's annexation of this village, which represents a new aggressive action against Lebanon and a violation of international law," said the league's deputy secretary general for political affairs, Mohammad Zakareya Ismail.

Israel and its South Lebanon Army (SLA) allies incorporated the village of Amnun into the Israeli-occupied "security zone" in south Lebanon overnight Wednesday.

Ismail called on the U.N. Security Council and the international community to pressure Israel to rescind the action, saying it showed that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had "lied" when he said he wanted to withdraw his troops from south Lebanon.

Ismail also said the league condemned the Turkish incursion into northern Iraq as an "aggression against the sovereignty" of an Arab state and league member.

"No matter what the justifications of the Turkish government, such military operations are unacceptable and are not in line with the policy of good neighbourliness that the Arabs want to see Turkey following," he said.

Long-lost brain of 'last wild man in America' found at Smithsonian Institution

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The preserved brain of Ishi, an American Indian known as "the last wild man in America," has been found in a Smithsonian Institution warehouse more than eight decades after it vanished.

Methodical sleuthing by a pair of academics solved a mystery that may finally permit a proper burial of the last survivor of the Yahi Indian tribe.

The discovery, revealed Friday by the University of California at San Francisco, has electrified northern California tribes who struggled for years to locate Ishi's remains.

"To put Ishi back together, to get his remains back will be something that people will feel good about," said Larry Myer, director of the state's Native American Heritage Commission.

"It will give us a sense of healing,

a sense of control."

In 1911, Ishi wandered out of the foothills of the Sierra Nevada and into American legend. He had been hiding in the wilderness for years after the last of the Yahi were thought to have been killed by settlers or disease.

He became a nationwide sensation as a living example of "the last wild man in America." Ishi lived in a museum at UCSF, giving demonstrations of American Indian life for throngs of visitors. He died of tuberculosis in 1916.

An autopsy was performed — against Ishi's final wishes — and his brain was removed. But scientists lost track of the brain, and Indian leaders refused to go through with a burial ceremony without it. Ishi's body was cremated and his ashes were stored in a cemetery in Colma, south of San Francisco.

Two years ago, administrators at UCSF asked historian Nancy Rockefeller to determine whether the brain was at the university.

She learned that Duke University anthropologist Orin Starn was researching a book on Ishi and told him about the autopsy.

Starn found a file at the University of California at Berkeley that catalogued the transfer of Ishi's brain to the Smithsonian.

Last month, Starn confirmed the brain was being kept in a tank in Maryland by the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History. It is one of nine American Indian brains and thousands of skeletons collected for research.

"It was not uncommon to study brains in the early 20th century," Starn said. "Some people thought that different races had different brain sizes."

A Smithsonian spokesman said Friday that the institution has been in touch with tribes in California's Butte County to discuss repatriation.

Starn said he didn't think there any "bad intent" on the part of the institution, which apparently didn't know people were seeking the remains.

"I think Ishi is important as a symbol a reminder of what happened to indigenous people during the white takeover and conquest," Starn said. "He really was a victim of a Holocaust."

As the place where Ishi lived his final years, Rockefeller said UCSF has an obligation to return him.

"He captures your imagination," she said. "His basic humanness is what shines through in these accounts of him left by the whites who knew him, his humanness and his resiliency."

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